ŚRĪMAD BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

CHAPTER 9

The Royal Secret

Swami Chinmayananda

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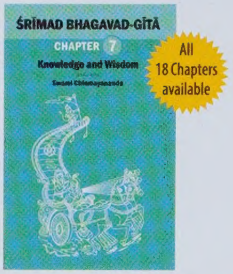

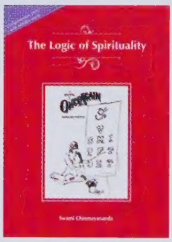

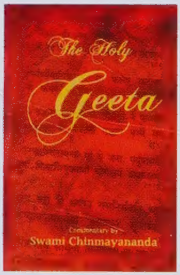

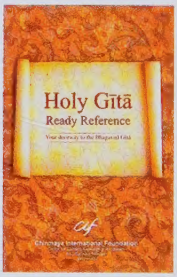

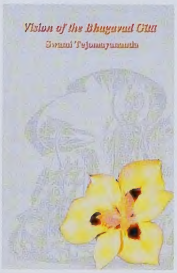

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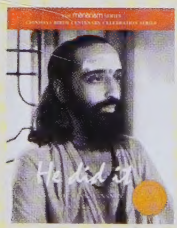

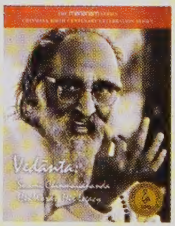

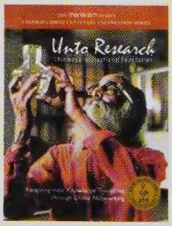

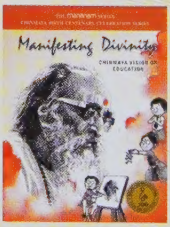

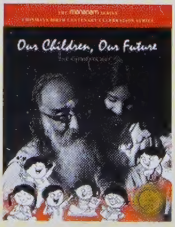

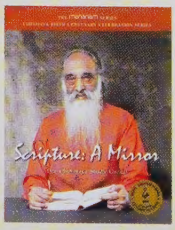

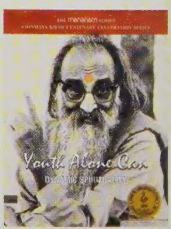

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भगवद्गीता ग्रन्थमाला

ŚRĪMAD BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ
CHAPTER 9
The Royal Secret

Commentary by
Swami Chinmayananda

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust

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Publisher's Note

The commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* (chapterwise) has been reprinted repeatedly to meet continuous demands. Efforts are made in this revised edition to eliminate the mistakes by following guidelines continuously updated by our team from Chinmaya Sampadan.

In this revised edition diacritical marks are used for transliteration of Sanskrit words in the verses as well as commentary. Its readability is also improved by enlarging the font size.

To be true to the Sanskrit text in transliteration, we have used 'brāhmaṇa' for the first varṇa instead of the commonly used word 'Brahmin.' It need not be confused with the term 'Brahman' of the Vedāntins.

A key to the transliteration and pronunciation has been added in the beginning of the book.

Our sincere word of thanks to dedicated team of devotees who have contributed to make this edition a better version.

17th February, 1996 **Central Chinmaya Mission Trust**
Mumbai - 400 072

Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide

In the book, Devanāgarī characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912. In it one fixed pronunciation value is given to each letter; f, q, w, x and z are not called to use. An audio recording of this guide is available at http://chinmayamission.com/scriptures.php. According to this scheme:

Devanāgarī	Translit-eration	Sounds Like	Devanāgarī	Translit-eration	Sounds Like
अ	a	s<u>o</u>n	ढ्	ḍh	a<u>dh</u>esive*
आ	ā	f<u>a</u>ther	ण्	ṇ	u<u>n</u>der*
इ	i	d<u>i</u>fferent	त्	t	<u>t</u>abla
ई	ī	f<u>ee</u>l	थ्	th	<u>th</u>umb
उ	u	f<u>u</u>ll	द्	d	<u>th</u>is
ऊ	ū	b<u>oo</u>t	ध्	dh	Gan<u>dh</u>i
ऋ	ṛ	<u>rh</u>ythm*	न्	n	<u>n</u>ose
ॠ	ṝ	**	प्	p	<u>p</u>en
ऌ	ḷ	**	फ्	ph	<u>ph</u>antom*
ए	e	ev<u>a</u>de	ब्	b	<u>b</u>oil
ऐ	ai	del<u>i</u>ght	भ्	bh	a<u>bh</u>or
ओ	o	c<u>o</u>re	म्	m	<u>m</u>ind
औ	au	n<u>ow</u>	य्	y	<u>y</u>es
क्	k	<u>c</u>alm	र्	r	<u>r</u>ight
ख्	kh	<u>kh</u>an	ल्	l	<u>l</u>ove
ग्	g	<u>g</u>ate	व्	v	<u>v</u>ery
घ्	gh	<u>gh</u>ost	श्	ś	<u>sh</u>ut
ङ्	ṅ	a<u>n</u>kle*	ष्	ṣ	<u>s</u>ugar
च्	c	<u>ch</u>uckle	स्	s	<u>s</u>imple
छ्	ch	wi<u>tch</u>*	ह्	h	<u>h</u>appy
ज्	j	<u>j</u>ustice	ं	ṁ	i<u>m</u>provise
झ्	jh	<u>Jh</u>ansi	ः	ḥ	**
ञ्	ñ	ba<u>ny</u>an	क्ष्	kṣ	ac<u>t</u>ion
ट्	ṭ	<u>t</u>ank	त्र्	tr	<u>th</u>ree*
ठ्	ṭh	**	ज्ञ्	jñ	<u>gn</u>osis
ड्	ḍ	<u>d</u>og	ऽ	'	a silent 'a'

* These letters don't have an exact English equivalent. An approximation is given here.
** These sounds cannot be approximated in English words.

The Royal Secret

Introduction

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā, as a textbook of Hindu renaissance, has necessarily to carry with it the seeds of thorough reformation, almost revolutionary in its onslaught. The fundamental principles remaining the same, a religion that keeps pace with life has to readjust itself to accommodate current social problems and political conditions. Religion was not extinct in the era of the Mahābhārata. But the Vaidika principles needed a re-adjustment and a re-affirmation in the context of the life available in that era. Vyāsa's mouthpiece, Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the most brilliant organ that sang a song of progress to the new era throbbing with its cultural revolt.

When the fundamentals forming the foundation are to be kept sacredly the same, the only adjustment that is possible for the expansion of the science of life, is to discover a more liberal means for its application, and to annotate the same in the language of the conflict and struggle available in that period. Blind faith can have a compelling charm only in the early ages of the people and when they grow stalwart in their reason, and almost muscular in their emotions, the impetuosity of the generation can no more be tamed and kept in bounds by the sandy beaches of barren faith. They demand and expect walls of unshakable logic and reason to support the stream of assertions in the philosophy of their thinkers. To a large extent,

an interpreter of a philosophy – not the philosopher – will have to dance to the rhythm of the inundations of the land and the direction of the current of thought and life in his age.

This new interpretation, at once intelligent and meaningful has, no doubt, injected a new vigour and brought fresh blood into the senile values of life and their ineffectual application in the society. Such repeated transfusions of youthfulness and vitality into the dilapidated body of the religion had sustained the ageless tradition of the Hindus through its chequered career down the aisles of time. One of the most powerful rejuvenation treatments that the immortal lore received in recent times is from the hands of Vyāsa, and the *Bhagavad-gītā* reports that operation divine.

From chapter seven on, we notice how Kṛṣṇa gathers a growing courage of assertion in His expressions and how He is no more struggling to veil His new religion as He has done almost upto chapter six. In chapter seven, we find how the champion of the revolt throws His gloves down when He says: "I shall tell you the full knowledge, both speculative and practical". Thereafter, Kṛṣṇa has been pursuing the theme of spiritual practices, as if He is a mathematician solving His problem, stage by stage, for the benefit of His students. Nowhere has He insisted upon any blind faith in what He says. On the other hand, at every stage, He has been scrupulously careful to supply the necessary data and the rational arguments for the why and the wherefore of the beliefs according to Vedānta, and the ways of self-perfection advocated by Vedānta.

The same tempo of ruthless intellectual estimation is being continued even in chapter nine and its very opening

stanza promises that the Lord will be giving, during His discourse, not only the theory of self-perfection but also the intellectual science behind it all. It is very clear, if sympathetically noticed that the kind teacher in Kṛṣṇa is carefully avoiding the vague and mystic technical terms, already then in use, in the literature of Vedānta, except for the most elementary.

Ideas have been simplified here so that they can be easily grasped by Arjuna, the representative of the ordinary educated men of his time. However, the same principles will be found to be explained again in a later chapter[1] under the orthodox terminology of Vedānta as kṣetra, Kṣetrajña, jñāna, jñeya, Puruṣa, prakṛti and so on.

'Dividing the subject of enquiry into its main divisions; analytical explanation of the divisions; categorical treatment of the subjects under each division; discussion of the relation among all the various parts and setting down the conclusions drawn therefrom' – this would in our days, be considered as the proper scientific method for the treatment of a subject. In this sense of the term, the *Gītā* is not at all scientific. But, at the same time, the conversational style of the *Gītā* has its own characteristic clarity and precision of śāstra. Kṛṣṇa Himself calls it 'the most secret (profound) science.' To every careful student of the *Gītā*, it will be clear that, in its scientific outlook and systematic explanations the discourses leave nothing to be desired.

[1] *Gītā* - 13

ॐ

श्री परमात्मने नमः

श्रीभगवानुवाच

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥ १ ॥

śrībhagavānuvāca

idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmyanasūyave,
jñānaṁ vijñānasahitaṁ yajjñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt. (1)

इदम् - this; तु - indeed; ते - to thee; गुह्यतमम् - greatest secret; प्रवक्ष्यामि - (I) shall now declare; अनसूयवे - to one who does not cavil; ज्ञानम् - knowledge; विज्ञान सहितम् - combined with experience (or Realisation); यत् - which; ज्ञात्वा - having known; मोक्ष्यसे - shall be free; अशुभात् - from evil

1. To thee who does not cavil, I shall now declare this, the greatest secret, the most profound Knowledge combined with experience (or Realisation); which having known, you shall be free from the sorrows of life.

In this very opening stanza, Kṛṣṇa promises that He will be discoursing herein 'the most profound Knowledge along with its Realisation', because Arjuna is one who is fit for this sacred confidence. In the early days of a revolt, there is a

compelling necessity for keeping a certain amount of secrecy regarding the philosophy of the revolution.

Arjuna had been found fit to share this secret Knowledge because, conversion into a new way of thinking is impossible only for those who have a tendency to carp at the new philosophy. Those who catch at small faults and errors, or who try to make trifling objections and raise false arguments against a philosophy, can never come to judge or evaluate that philosophy rightly, much less become enthusiastic followers of that way of life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has discovered Arjuna as one who is really anxious to evolve. Only, he wanted help from some quarter, to discover in himself an intellectual conviction for the way of life he was to pursue. The Lord says that He will declare the new philosophy to Arjuna, 'who does not carp or cavil' and the benefit of this Knowledge, along with its practical application has also been indicated in this stanza; 'Having known which, you shall be free from all the limitation of finite existence'.

An individual becomes incapable of facing the challenges of life and meeting its rising demands because, in his false estimation of things and beings, he comes to live in discord with the total orchestra of life. To understand ourselves and the world outside is to know the secret of keeping a healthy and happy relationship with the world outside. He, who is capable of tuning himself up, thus with the total, is the one who is marked out for sure success and complete victory in life.

Because of his internal maladjustments, we found Arjuna, the hero of his age, behaving as a shattered personality in the opening chapter of the *Gītā*. Such an individual, split in himself, comes to feel the problems of life too heavy, the duties of life too irksome, and the life itself too much to bear. All those, who thus allow the life to run over them and crush them down, are termed as saṁsārins. Those who knew the art of self-development can easily learn how to direct the engine of existence from the driver's seat, safely around every impediment, and they are called the Men of Realisation, the saints, and the sages. This status is the heritage of man – of every intelligent being – who has the enthusiasm and the courage to master the life and live like a God upon earth ruling over the circumstances, and smiling at the adversities.

The Kṛṣṇa-cure for the Arjuna-disease is very systematically prescribed in this chapter.

To generate an all-out enthusiasm in the art of living, which each student has to bring about in his own life, the art of self-perfection is praised in the following:

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम्।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम्॥ २॥

rājavidyā rājaguhyaṁ pavitramidamuttamam,
pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyaṁ susukhaṁ kartumavyayam. (2)

राजविद्या - the king of sciences; राजगुह्यम् - royal secret; पवित्रम् - purifier; इदम् - this; उत्तमम् - highest; प्रत्यक्ष अवगमम् - realisable by direct intuitional knowledge; धर्म्यम् - according to righteousness; सुसुखम् - very easy; कर्तुम् - to perform; अव्ययम् - imperishable

2. Royal science, royal secret, the supreme purifier is this, realisable by direct intuitional knowledge, according to the dharma, very easy to perform, imperishable.

Vedānta is no religion in the ordinary concept of the term, which implies the formalistic observance of some physical and mental discipline, in some house of God, during a specific day of the week, for a prescribed length of time. If we consider religion as an art of right action, then Vedānta is indeed, the noblest of sciences, because it provides the scientific explanation for the entire ways of right living. Kṛṣṇa here qualifies it as: 'This is the royal science, the royal mystery, pure and very high'.

The term 'Royal Secret' (rājaguhyam) has been too literally understood and insisted upon by the unimaginative paṇḍitas and the effect of their preaching has brought about, to a large extent, the shattering of our culture, at once distressing and sad. The term 'secret' here is to be understood as 'profound'. Though Newton's 'Laws of Motion' faithfully work out around every living creature and inert things of the world, to a child or to an ignorant villager, it is a secret, inasmuch as, it is too profound for their lay understanding.

Similarly, here, the science of self-development and the theories of Vedānta are too profound for the uninitiated that it may be considered as a secret; it is to be unravelled to everyone, which is the duty of the custodians of our scriptural knowledge, traditionally called as the brāhmaṇas (brahmins). Even today all true brāhmaṇas perform this function.

Even if there be a science, royal in its import, deep in its profundity, 'supreme in its purifying effects', unless it is available for our comprehension it is almost useless. Here, Kṛṣṇa promises that it is 'clearly comprehensible', since it can be apprehended directly by an immediate experience of the Self.

Also it is a science 'pertaining to dharma' (dharmyam). The term 'dharma' has already been explained[1]. Man is nothing but a parcel of minerals in their gross and subtle states, if the Conscious Principle were not blessing them. This awareness, called the Self, is then the dharma of man,

[1] As the 'law of being' – refer general introduction – *Gītā* - 1 & 2

the principle of life in him. The spiritual science that the Lord of Vrindavan promises to enunciate in this chapter, is neither the physical science of the objects of the world, nor the science of psychology that explains the field of emotions and thoughts but the science of the Self, the deepest essence in each individual.

Very easy to perform: Religion is a subjective technique to be pursued and accomplished by each in himself. If this great science, into which Lord Kṛṣṇa is proposing to initiate Arjuna, is an extremely difficult proposition to live, then, naturally, it is a futile philosophy. The poverty of a country is not solved by the declaration of its scientists that there are inexhaustible quantities of unclaimed gold, waiting for free transportation in the moon! In order to remove this vague fear, it has been fully confirmed that the technique of self-integration and the ultimate gaining of a complete mastery over oneself is an easy art to master for the sincere and the diligent.

Even if it be easy, no intelligent man will pursue the path, if the gain acquired thereby, is perishable and temporary. It is endorsed here that the gains acquired through a faithful pursuit of this royal science of self-development and self-mastery are 'of an imperishable nature.' To realise the Self is to become the Self, the Eternal, and the infinite Reality behind the phenomenal world of appearances.

As a contrast to those who are seeking, the destiny of those who are not seeking the Imperishable is declared to be the disturbed life of saṁsāra:

अश्रद्दधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परन्तप।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥ ३ ॥

aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa,
aprāpya māṁ nivartante mṛtyusaṁsāravartmani. (3)

अश्रद्दधानाः - without faith; पुरुषाः - men; धर्मस्य - of duty; अस्य - of this; परन्तप - O Parantapa; अप्राप्य - without attaining; माम् - Me; निवर्तन्ते - return; मृत्यु संसार वर्त्मनि - in the path of this world of death

3. Persons without faith in this dharma (the divine Self), O Parantapa, without attaining Me, return to the path of rebirth, fraught with death.

Those who are not following a life of accomodation and adjustment to the eternal values of the Self, they necessarily, 'return without attaining Me'. Men of extrovertedness, meditating upon the sense objects and bartering away their intellectual capacities, emotional powers and physical strength for seeking, acquiring and possessing the implements to work out their sensual satisfaction, they must necessarily return to 'the path of rebirth, fraught with death'.

The more an individual meditates upon the finite, strives to gain the changeable, and gets choked by the sorrows of the perishable, the more he comes to worship and court the lower nature of the Self, the prakṛti. However big the ocean may be, a drop of it, taken at any point in its infinite expanse, should taste saline. In the same way, whatever be the method of worship, whatever be the motive behind the courtings once we allow ourselves to be courtiers of the world of objects, we are doomed to taste the saline tears of sorrow, because of the very ephemeral nature of the 'objects of our love.'

The world of names and forms is finite and ever changing. At every moment, every object is living through a process of change, and each change is a death to its previous existence. Thus, the term 'death' used here by Kṛṣṇa in His phrase 'fraught with death' is to be understood in this liberal meaning of the term. In short, courtiers of the finite, reach the tragic realms of constant death.

All those persons who miss their way, and reach to walk the path of darkness, ultimately come to suffer the sorrows of the finitude and how they fall into this mistake in their valuations, are all fully indicated in the first line. 'Persons without śraddhā for this dharma' are sure to miss their way on the great pilgrimage of life. In this stanza the crude meaning of the term śraddhā as 'blind faith' should not be read. In our days, almost in all religions the priest class encourages this cheap emotionalism totally divorced from intellect and converts an entire society to become blind fanatics, neither helping the faithful to grow spiritually nor bringing into

the community anything but hatred and jealousy, rivalries and disturbances.

In the perfect science of Vedānta, śraddhā though it also implies 'faith' in the Tagorean sense of the term[1], it is not built upon the misty vapours of emotionalism, but upon the solid beams of intellectual understanding and perfect awareness of the logic of thought behind the theory. Śaṅkarācārya defines śraddhā as the 'moulding of the life and living, on the basis of right intellectual comprehension of what the scripture indicates and the teachers explain.'[2] It is the enduring faith that lifts us to the realms beyond the reach of the mind and intellect, and helps to carve out of the mortal, the immortal and the infinite.

Those who have not this healthy understanding and approach to Truth cannot expect to evolve spiritually or benefit themselves by religion more than, perhaps, acquiring a superficial discipline in their outer behaviour in the world of things and beings. The term dharma has been already described.[3] In the textbooks of Vedānta, the main preoccupation of the ṛṣis is to supply enough arguments and intelligent illustrations to prove to their students that beyond their present conception of themselves as mere bodies and bundles of thoughts and feelings, they are, in essence, the pure Awareness, without which none of their

[1] Faith is the bird, that feels the light.
And sings when, the dawn is still dark. – Tagore

[2] Read Swamijī's talks on *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* – 25
śāstrasya guruvākyasya satyabudhyāvadhāraṇā,
sā śraddhā kathitā sadbhiḥ yayā vastūpalabhyate.

[3] As the 'law of being' – refer general introduction – (*Gītā* – 1 & 2)

different layers of personalities can ever come to exist or consistently function, or provide for them a harmonious experience of the whole.

That without which a substance cannot be the substance is called its dharma or essence; e.g., heat in fire, cold in ice. Those who have no faith in the divine essence, which is the Self in them, are those who get easily abducted by the cooing of their emotions, or the barkings of their intellect, or the whisperings of their flesh. They slip into devolution and come to live the life of biped animals, when they once lose their faith in the divine core which is the essential Being. A mad king, who has forgotten his own kingship, throws his kingly dignity to the winds and runs about naked on the streets, behaving as though he were one of the homeless vagabonds. Similarly, when an individual, in his own self-forgetfulness of the dignity of his essential Selfhood, comes to live in the open streets of sense pleasures, hunting for his satisfactions, as though he were nothing better than the crawling worms in the wayside ditches.

Simple looking though it be, this stanza is very pregnant in its untold suggestiveness. By contrasting thus, the path of Knowledge with the path of ignorance in the most vivid terms, Kṛṣṇa brings to the comprehension of Arjuna the advisability of the blessed path of higher seeking, the realisation of the Imperishable.

In the following, the Knowledge is, therefore, glorified when Kṛṣṇa explains that dharma, which is to be followed, is:

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥ ४ ॥

mayā tatamidaṁ sarvaṁ jagadavyaktamūrtinā,
matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣvavasthitaḥ. (4)

मया - by Me; ततम् - is pervaded; इदम् - this; सर्वम् - all; जगत् - world; अव्यक्त मूर्तिना - in My unmanifested form (aspect); मत् स्थानि - exist in Me; सर्वभूतानि - all beings; न - not; च - and; अहम् - I; तेषु - in them; अवस्थितः - placed, abiding

4. All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifested form (aspect); all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them.

In the previous chapter throughout, it has been indicated that the imperishable Self is the supreme unmanifest that forms the essential substratum for the manifested mental impressions, the projection of which causes the creation. This eternal unmanifest Self is now described to indicate It in the following stanzas. Faithfully adhering to the role of the divine song, here also, the first person singular is used to indicate the pure Consciousness, the Ātman.

'All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifested form': Pervasiveness is the nature of the subtle and the subtle of the subtle must necessarily be the all-pervasive. The all-

pervasive alone can be eternal and infinite because otherwise it would become limited by that which is not pervaded by it and all limited things necessarily must have forms. All those that have forms are perishable substances (dravya). Thus Self, in its essential unmanifest nature, must be pervading everything, as the mud pervades all forms and shapes in all mud pots.

If thus, the Infinite pervades the finite[1], what exactly is the relationship between them? Is it that the finite rose from the Infinite? Or is it that the Infinite produced the finite? Has the Infinite Itself become the finite, as a modification of Itself, or do they both, among themselves, keep a father-son, or a master-servant relationship? The above mentioned questions are some of the relations found described in the various religions of the world. The dualists can afford to indulge in such a fancied picture of some relation or the other between the finite and the Infinite. But the non-dualists (advaitins) cannot accept this idea, since to them, the eternal Self alone is the one and the only Reality.

The second line of this stanza is a classical description of this 'relationless-relationship' between the Real and the unreal. 'All beings exist in Me but I dwell not in them'. To a hasty reader this would strike as an incomprehensible paradox expressed in a jumble of empty words. But to one, who has understood well the theory of superimposition, this becomes very easy. The ghost-vision can come only upon the post. And what exactly is the relationship between the ghost and the post from the standpoint of the post? The innocent

[1] Read Swamiji's talks on *Īśāvāsya-upaniṣad* - opening mantra

post, in infinite love for the deluded fool, can only make a similar statement as the Lord has made here. "The ghost", must say the post, "is no doubt in me, but I am not in the ghost; and therefore, I have never frightened any deluded traveller at any time". In the same fashion, the Lord says here, "I, in My unmanifest nature, is the substratum for all the manifested, chaos of names and forms, but neither in their joys nor in their sorrows, neither in their births nor in their deaths, am I sharing their destinies, because, I do not dwell in them".

This line resounds a faithful echo of the same idea, perhaps, more crisply expressed earlier[1], where it was said 'I am not in them, they are in Me'. In short, it is indicated here that the Self, through its identification with the matter envelopments, that comes to 'dwell in them' is the pain-ridden mortal, while the same Self which has successfully withdrawn all Its false arrogations with the matter layers and has come to realise that, 'I do not dwell in them' is the Self, immortal and unmanifest.

[1] Discourses on *Gītā* – 7.12

Then there must be some sort of an existence for the finite in the Infinite – eh?

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम्।
भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥ ५ ॥

na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogamaiśvaram,
bhūtabhṛnna ca bhūtastho mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ. (5)

न - not; च - and; मत् स्थानि - dwelling in Me; भूतानि - beings; पश्य - behold; मे - My; योगम् - yoga; ऐश्वरम् - divine; भूतभृत् - supporting the beings; न - not; च - and; भूतस्थः - dwelling in the beings; मम - My; आत्मा - Self; भूतभावनः - bringing forth beings

5. Nor do beings exist (in reality) in Me; behold My divine yoga! supporting all beings, but not dwelling in them, is (Me) My Self, the efficient cause of all beings.

In paradoxes alone can delusory nothingness be defined and explained away by an intellect. A growing boy – who is suffering from a mental hallucination that a fairy on butterfly wings, coming to his window at night – can be pacified and trained to laugh at it only by explaining that it is a loving and graceful child born to mother-night and living in the house of moon.

The hallucination of plurality, cognised and experienced, when the Self looks out through the windows

of its mind and intellect, can be pacified and removed only when it is explained away and the explanation of the non-existence can be done only in the language of a paradox. Here Kṛṣṇa is quite at it, with a pleasant vengeance, we may add!!

Continuing the strain of His arguments in the previous stanza, here He says, "Nor do things exist in Me". In the previous chapter we were told 'All beings exist in Me' although "I dwell not in them". Now here He says that in the Infinite, never has the finite ever risen up! Continuing our example of the post and the ghost, this is equivalent to the post declaring that, 'in me, the electric post, never has a ghost existed'. In pure Awareness, in its infinite nature of sheer Knowledge, there never was, never is and can never be any world of pluralistic embodiment, just as, for the waker none of the pleasures of the dream world is ever available. In short, at the time of the direct subjective experience of the Self there is no cognition of the pluralistic world, which is but a creature of misunderstanding born out of the forgetfulness of the Infinite.

The Self is the one 'that brings forth and supports all beings' just as the ocean gives birth to, supports and nourishes all the waves in it. "And yet", says Kṛṣṇa, "Myself does never dwell in them". Just in the same way, the ocean can cry that "I am never the waves". The mud is the womb of all pots, the sustainer of their shapes, the nourisher of their forms, and yet, none of the pots, nor all the pots put together, can ever define or give a total knowledge of the mud. Pure Consciousness, divine and eternal, is the substratum that sustains and illumines the entire panorama of the ever changable plurality.

The objects of the world conveying their stimuli through the doors of the sense organs create mental waves which are illumined by the Conscious Principle residing in all forms. If the Awareness is not there, the external world must necessarily fail in giving the mind and intellect the concept of its life as a series of unbroken experiences. Just as the cotton is in the cloth, or the gold in all ornaments, or the heat in fire; so too, the Imperishable is in the perishable. The dreamer can function only in the waker; the waker pervades the dream experiences, and at the same time, the waker is not in the dream nor in fact, when awakened fully, does the dream ever exist in the waker.

Kṛṣṇa feels that the language of paradox is proving too much of a riddle to the gross intellect of the average man in Arjuna, and therefore, in His divine kindness, the Lord provides for His disciple an example:

यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान्।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥ ६ ॥

yathākāśasthito nityaṁ vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān,
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthānītyupadhāraya. (6)

यथा - as; **आकाशस्थितः** - rests in the space; **नित्यम्** - always; **वायुः** - the air; **सर्वत्रगः** - moving everywhere; **महान्** - mighty; **तथा** - so; **सर्वाणि** - all; **भूतानि** - beings; **मत् स्थानि** - rest in Me; **इति** - thus; **उपधारय** - know

6. As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests always in space (the ākāśa), even so, know you, all beings rest in Me.

The confused prince, trying to reconcile the full import of the riddle is helped here by the kindly teacher in Kṛṣṇa by a vivid example. To imagine the idea of a substance that exists everywhere, allowing everything to exist in it, but at the same time, it in itself does not get conditioned by the things that exist in it, is very difficult, and the ordinary comprehension cannot easily soar to those heights of understanding and appreciation. As a prop for an ordinary intellect, to raise itself up so that it may peep over its own limitations and gain a vision at the unravelling expanse of the Infinite, here

is a brilliant example given by the Wonder-singer of the Yamuna Ghāṭas.

The gross can never condition the subtle. As the poet sings, 'Stonewalls do not make a prison' for, even though we may imprison the body of the prisoner, his thoughts are ever free to reach his kith and kin at their hearth. The gross stonewalls cannot limit the flight of the subtle thoughts. If, once this principle is well understood, the example becomes very expressive exhibiting all its secret suggestions.

'Know you Arjuna', that the winds curl, swirl and whirl around everywhere in space; they can move and exist only in space; the space supports and envelopes them everywhere, and yet, they do not ever at all limit the space. This beautiful example, when meditated upon by any seeker, if he has at least an average amount of intellectual comprehension, will enable him to define, at least in his own mind, the right relationship that exists between the Self and the not-Self. The Real supports the unreal; the unreal seemingly lives – through its history of misery and sorrows, fleeting joys and passing pleasures – in the Real and yet, the unreal can never condition the Real.

When the wind is moving, the space need never move. None of the qualities of the wind is the quality of the space (ākāśa). Compared with the outstretching infinite space, in which the universes keep on revolving among themselves at a speed measured in light years, the atmospheric disturbances are only upto the height of a few miles off the surface of the globe. In the infinite vastness of the Real,

the arena of disturbances caused by its flirtations with its own assumed self-ignorance, is only at a negligible area ... and even there, the relationship between the false and the Real is the relationship between the fickle breeze and the infinite space.

These two are stanzas not merely to be explained away by words, however true the commentator may be; they are to be meditated upon by the students individually. Milk cannot be eaten nor laddū swallowed; those who do so may come to suffer.

Then what about your wonderful theory of a systematic law of rebirth, the story of a Creator creating the world during his daytime, and dissolving the entire lot during his night-time, and so on..? Listen:

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम्।
कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम्॥ ७॥

sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām,
kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpādau visṛjāmyaham. (7)

सर्व भूतानि - all beings; कौन्तेय - O Kaunteya (O son of Kuntī); प्रकृतिम् - to prakṛti (nature); यान्ति - go, merge; मामिकाम् - My; कल्पक्षये - at the end of a kalpa; पुनः - again; तानि - them; कल्प आदौ - at the beginning of (the next) kalpa; विसृजामि - send them forth; अहम् - I

7. All beings, O Kaunteya (O son of Kuntī), go into My prakṛti (nature) at the end of a kalpa; I send them forth again at the beginning of (the next) kalpa.

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात्॥ ८॥

prakṛtiṁ svāmavaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ,
bhūtagrāmamimaṁ kṛtsnamavaśaṁ prakṛtervaśāt. (8)

प्रकृतिम् - to prakṛti; स्वाम् - My own; अवष्टभ्य - having animated; विसृजामि - (I) send forth; पुनः - again; पुनः - again; भूतग्रामम् -

multitude of beings; इमम् - this; कृत्स्नम् - all; अवशम् - helpless; प्रकृतेः - of nature (prakṛti); वशात् - by force

8. Animating My prakṛti, I, again and again send forth all this multitude of beings, helpless by the force of nature (prakṛti).

Earlier in a discourse Lord Kṛṣṇa had explained[1] how the creative projection of the total mind transcribes the existing subtle vāsanās into the apparent gross forms, and again during the dissolution, the gross projections are absorbed into their unmanifested condition. The same idea is explained here again in these two stanzas, not merely as an idle repetition but with a definite purpose of indicating that the Creator is capable of functioning only under the grace of the supreme unmanifest Self.

The eternal Brahman functioning through the equipment of the total mind is the God Principle, the Creator, and the same absolute Brahman functioning through the limited individual mind and intellect is the individualised Self, the mortal ego (saṁsārī). The same sun gets reflected in the clear still waters of a vast lake and in the disturbed muddy pool on the roadside; the difference between the two distinctive reflections, in the different equipment, will explain the difference between the individual ego and the God Principle. Just as the sun in the sky can rightly say: "I am the cause for the brilliant reflection in the lake and the broken, dull reflection in the wayside pool", so too, Kṛṣṇa, the Self declares: "I am the vital animating Reality behind the Creator, and the created".

[1] *Gītā* – 8.17, 18 &19

The adjunct of the God Principle, the total body, mind and intellect equipment, constitutes the lower nature of the Self, called the 'prakṛti'. At the beginning of a cycle the existing vāsanās in the lower nature get projected out[1] and at the end of the kalpa all beings go to My prakṛti.

The act of invigorating or fertilising the prakṛti to grow up again into the tree of saṁsāra, is an act of grace from the Brahman. If the supreme Consciousness were not to identify with the prakṛti, (māyā), she being inert in herself, cannot project forth any life at all. The entire multitude of vāsanās, 'I project again and again'. When the Self animates prakṛti, the vāsanās have no freedom at all to refuse expression because 'they are helpless under the sway of the prakṛti'.

In philosophy, the ṛṣis often explain the universe from the standpoint of the macrocosm (samaṣṭi) which has a knack of confusing the students, unless each student strives hard to understand its implications subjectively in himself, as microcosm (vyaṣṭi). Viewed thus, in the individual subjective inner life story, the statement proves to be indeed true, since without the life in us – the Self, identifying with the lower nature in us – the mind and intellect equipment cannot create the characteristic ego, which can come to suffer its limited existence.

We have already found that the greatest scoundrel and the noblest saint are both the same when neither of them is identifying with his mind and intellect, in the state of their

[1] 'I send them forth again'.
Refer to the story of the four men sleeping in the wayside rest house.
Gītā – 8.18 &19

deep sleep. On waking up, the scoundrel mind projects a scoundrel, and the saintly mind projects the saint; and the vitality behind both is the same spark of life, Consciousness Absolute. Thus, the scoundrel is incapable of not behaving as a scoundrel, as much as the saint cannot, by any chance, play the scoundrel, even for a moment. The scoundrel is as much helpless as the saint, both being 'helplessly under the sway of prakṛti' in each. And the entire drama of the dissolution of 'vāsanā expressions' and the projection of the 'vāsanā dances' are performed upon the changeless imperishable eternal platform of the Self; 'I project again and again'.

We may note here that a large portion of the categories of Vedānta have been beautifully summarised here, and no other pen can give such a masterly summary except the pen of Vyāsa, softened by the volumes of literature that it had produced, for all later generations to admire, enjoy and profit by.

The law of karma is incontrovertible. As the action, so the reaction. If the Self administers the dissolution and supervises the projection of the pluralistic world, how far does the law of karma shackle the Infinite? ...Listen:

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय।
उदासीनवदासीनमसक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥ ९ ॥

na ca māṁ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya,
udāsīnavadāsīnamasaktaṁ teṣu karmasu. (9)

न - not; च - and; माम् - Me; तानि - these; कर्माणि - acts; निबध्नन्ति - bind; धनञ्जय - O Dhanañjaya; उदासीनवत् - like one indifferent; आसीनम् - sitting; असक्तम् - unattached; तेषु - in those; कर्मसु - acts

9. These acts do not bind Me, O Dhanañjaya, sitting like one indifferent, and unattached to these acts.

In the case of the limited ego, its egocentric actions leave behind their impressions, which ultimately pursue it as unavoidable reactions. All egocentric actions, which are always motivated by selfish desires, leave behind their ugly footprints upon the shores of the mind (vāsanās), while actions which are not ego motivated leave no trail (vāsanās), as birds leave no footprints as they move along in the sky. We can compare an ungrateful son kicking his own father, with an innocent child in a playful mood kicking its own father with both its legs. A philosopher's subtle vision is not

necessary to understand the difference in texture between these two persons performing the same action. Wherever and whenever an egocentric action, whipped up by selfish desires is undertaken, gross and painful reactions must necessarily ensue.

In the case of Eternal animating Its prakṛti, and projecting out again and again the multitude of beings, there is neither any attachment (rāga) nor any aversion (dveṣa), and therefore, by this mere happening on the Eternal, the Supreme is not affected: 'These acts do not bind Me'.

However tragic and murderous the play may be, however tearful and sad the story be, however rainy and stormy the scene be, the white screen in the cinema hall at the end of the play carries neither the marks of the blood spilt, nor the stains of the tears shed, nor the wear and tear of the storm raged. At the same time, we all know that, but for the changeless screen, the story could never have been unravelled through the medium of light and shade. In the same fashion, the ever pure infinite, as the Self, becomes the enduring platform for the drama of sorrow that is expressed in the language of the plurality, enacted by the infinite vāsanās, helplessly repeating their parts learnt by them through the hours of their empty yesterdays!!

The steam in the engine is not punished for the disaster of derailment, nor is the steam complimented when the train reaches its destination in time. It is very well known that neither the disaster nor the successful accomplishment of the journey could ever take place without the steam. The engine without the steam is inert iron of a particular shape, dull and

heavy; it is the steam that dynamises and renders it capable of its actions of cruel destruction, or kindly construction. Since the steam in the engine has neither an anxiety to move the train, nor an aversion to move it, the steam is ignored in the achievements of the train, whether good or bad. In short, it is the motive behind the action that determines its reaction.

The Self is the source of all dynamism. It dynamises the mind. Each mind is a bundle of vāsanās. Good vāsanās make the mind sing the song of joy and harmony. Bad vāsanās in the mind make it groan with sobs and tears. The needle in the gramophone is not responsible for the song that the record sings. As the record, so the music. Similarly, the Self is eternal. It is unmindful of what type of world is projected forth. Nor is It anxious, in any sense of the term, to create a better world. Sunlight illumines whatever happens to be there in its light, be it a murder, or be it a martyrdom. Neither the glory of the martyr, nor the crime of the murderer can reach the sun. The Self, as pure Consciousness, illumines the vāsanās and lends them the capacity to project out, be it for the damnation of themselves or for their own self glorification. 'Sitting as one neutral, unattached to these acts', the Self reveals in the realm of Its lower nature (prakṛti).

What exactly is this strange relationship between the Infinite and the finite? The finite acts because of the Infinite, and yet the Infinite is said to be neutral ... how?

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम्।
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥ १० ॥

mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram,
hetunānena kaunteya jagadviparivartate. (10)

मया - by Me; अध्यक्षेण - as her supervisor; प्रकृतिः - nature; सूयते - produces; स चर अचरम् - the moving and the unmoving; हेतुना - by cause; अनेन - by this; कौन्तेय - O Kaunteya; जगत् - the world; विपरिवर्तते - revolves

10. Under Me as her supervisor, prakṛti (nature) produces the moving and the unmoving; because of this, O Kaunteya, the world revolves.

In Vedānta, this relationship between the actionless Self and the active not-Self has been brought out by a bunch of analogies, each one trying to throw much light upon this sacred tie of 'relationless-relationship'.

The sun in the sky remaining where it is, warms up the objects upon which its rays fall, without warming the intervening medium through which they pass. Similarly, the Self remains in Its own infinite glory, and the not-Self gets dynamised to act, as the prakṛti, in the mere presence of the Self.

The king gets a fancy that he should visit a given pilgrim centre during the full moon day of the following month, and having expressed this intention to his minister, the king forgets all about it. But on the day prior to the following full moon, the minister approaches the king to remind him that it is time for the royal procession. When the king comes out, he finds that the entire route is thronged with his subjects. Welcoming arches are raised at different places enroute. All detailed arrangements are planned out and colourfully executed for his darśanam and return. All the officers and subjects have poured out all their capacities and knowledge to make the royal visit a great success.

In all these feverish activities, everyone gained his authority and power only because of the king, and yet, the king himself was nowhere in the picture. The minister had his sanction from the king, and therefore, his orders were faithfully executed by all others. Had the minister in himself tried to organise such a show as an ordinary citizen, he would never have succeeded even by a fraction. Similarly, in the mere presence of the Self, prakṛti borrows its sanction to plan and to execute, to act and to achieve.

Subjectively, this becomes more clear. The Ātman, merely by Its presence illumines the mind and intellect and creates for the expression of their vāsanās, an entire field of world of objects and the required instruments of experience, constituted of the organs of perception and the organs of action. 'Nature, while I preside, gives birth to the world of things and beings.' Nature here means the unmanifested that gets projected forth as the manifest.

The continued dance of the world of plurality to the rhythm of change and death is maintained in the presence of the Self; 'the world wheels round and round because of this'. In the final analysis, Self does nothing. It is the prakṛti that projects and executes; the prakṛti that gets animated in the proximity of the Self. It is the light of the Self that vitalises the prakṛti and makes her exist and act. That is all the relationship between the Self – the Puruṣa – and the not-Self – the prakṛti.

This will become clearer if the student tries to understand this relationship exactly as the relationship that can exist between the wayside post and the ghost that is seen superimposed upon it by the deluded.

If the Self be thus the essential Reality in every form and if It be ever free from the sorrows and tribulations of the finite, why is it that all beings are not able to identify themselves with It and exist as the Self? Listen:

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम्।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम्॥ ११॥

avajānanti māṁ mūḍhā mānuṣīṁ tanumāśritam,
paraṁ bhāvamajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram. (11)

अवजानन्ति - disregard; माम् - Me (the Lord); मूढाः - fools; मानुषीम् - human; तनुम् - form; आश्रितम् - refuged in; परम् - higher; भावम् - state or nature; अजानन्तः - not knowing; मम - My; भूतमहेश्वरम् - the great Lord of all beings

11. Fools[1] disregard Me when I dwell in human form; they know not My higher being as the great Lord of all beings.

In the seventh chapter, while giving a discourse upon the 'higher' and 'lower' nature of the Eternal, Kṛṣṇa declared that the foolish, in their ignorance of the supreme state of the higher Self, as Immutable and Transcendental (*Gītā* – 7.24), regard the unmanifest as having come into manifestation. In this chapter, while claiming to be the Self of all, Kṛṣṇa uses the same strong word, 'fools' to condemn those who cling

[1] This also suggests that, 'they are fools who are not able to recognise Me in all human forms; My devotees shall respect and revere one another as though the other is I, expressing through him'.

on to the form and lose the essence. "Unaware of My higher nature, fools regard Me as dwelling in a particular form".

Idol worship is, no doubt, a great help and a convenient technique by which the limited mind and intellect can learn safely to swim across the ocean of saṁsāra and reach the infinite shores that lie beyond. Vyāsa was the father of present type of idol worship although the rudiments of the technique are met with even in the earliest Vaidika periods, wherein a manifested phenomenon is made to represent the unmanifested noumenon. Fire was worshipped during the yajñas and yāgas, and the revered ṛṣi himself, as the Guru, was considered equally divine for the purposes of upāsanā in the Vaidika period.

An extension of this technique in its application is the idol worship of the present day. As the progenitor of this new innovation, Vyāsa could clearly see the possible dangers that might come into vogue, when the later generations forget to understand the science that supports the practice. And how true was his fear! He, therefore, had to carefully indicate the pitfalls, and warn the pilgrims on the path of devotion in right time against them.

This stanza is clothed in such excellent well-chosen words that they have a general philosophical meaning with a particular significance inasmuch as they clearly warn us against the above-mentioned pitfalls.

To mistake the idol for God, or the form of the Guru to be the Infinite, is to mistake the container for the contents. An idol is only a symbol (pratīka) for an imperceptible

and subtle Truth. To play with the milk bottle is not to feel refreshed when one is hungry or thirsty; playing with a spoon and fork over an empty plate is no satisfaction when the player is really hungry. To mistake the idol to be itself the goal is to mistake the means for the end. And such a misunderstanding breeds fanatics, who sow seeds of rivalry and jealousy to reap in time a harvest of death and disaster, all in the name of their stone-deities, wooden-symbols, or brass-gods! Three coloured tiny bits may make a khadi-flag, but it is not my motherland; but when I bow my head as my national flag goes up, I am adoring my country; the flag is the sacred symbol of my country's culture and its aspirations.

With this idea in mind, if we read the stanza it becomes very vivid and clear. The Lord says: "Ordinary devotees are unaware of My real status as the great Lord of all beings[1]" and adds: "These deluded fools scorn Me when I dwell in human form" meaning, when they consider Him, the Self, as living merely a human form, which He may take to Himself, when He lists, to bless the generation in that fashion.

[1] bhūtamaheśvaram – *Gītā* – 9.11

Why the fools are rendered incapable of right understanding and correct judgment regarding the true nature of the Self?

मोघाशा मोघकर्माणो मोघज्ञाना विचेतसः।
राक्षसीमासुरीं चैव प्रकृतिं मोहिनीं श्रिताः॥ १२॥

moghāśā moghakarmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasaḥ,
rākṣasīmāsurīṁ caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīṁ śritāḥ. (12)

मोघाशा - of vain hopes; मोघकर्माणः - of vain actions; मोघज्ञानाः - of vain knowledge; विचेतसः - senseless; राक्षसीम् - devilish; आसुरीम् - undivine; च - and; एव - verily; प्रकृतिम् - nature; मोहिनीम् - delusive; श्रिताः - (are) possessed of

12. Of vain hopes, of vain actions, of vain knowledge, and senseless, they verily are possessed of the delusive nature of rākṣasas and asuras.

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम्॥ १३॥

mahātmānastu māṁ pārtha daivīṁ prakṛtimāśritāḥ,
bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādimavyayam. (13)

महात्मानः - great souls; तु - but; माम् - Me; पार्थ - O Pārtha; दैवीम् - divine; प्रकृतिम् - nature; आश्रिताः - refuged in; भजन्ति - worship; अनन्यमनसः - with a mind devoted to nothing else; ज्ञात्वा - knowing; भूत आदिम् - source of all beings; अव्ययम् - imperishable

13. But the Mahātmās (great souls) O Pārtha, partaking of My divine nature, worship Me with a single mind (with a mind devoted to nothing else), knowing Me as the imperishable source of all beings.

In order to drive home an argument, it is the style in Kṛṣṇa's discourses that He always brings the contrasting factors together so that each may come to shine all the more against the background supplied by the other. Here is a pair of stanzas in which, if the former explains the low men of delusive nature (rākṣasas and asuras), the latter paints the picture of the great souled ones (Mahātmās), possessed of the divine qualities.

Deluded by false desires and wearied with false activities to fulfil those wrong desires, some become confused in intellect and totally confounded in their reasoning. Such people lose all divine perspective and become monstrous in their activity[1], expressing nothing but their demoniac sensuous nature at all times. Such men are called here as rākṣasas and asuras, belonging to the tradition of Rāvaṇa and the culture of Laṅkā.

Men who have thus lost their higher urges in their preoccupations with the material gains and sensuous joys, come to breed a civilisation which respects no sanctity of life nor of wealth, and to them the temporary end justifies even the most vicious means. It does not call for great power of imagination to understand what would be the nature of the world and the life of the community in it, when such

[1] The same idea has been described with equal clarity in *Gītā* – 7.15

men come to rule over the society. War and pestilence, crime and disease, inequality in wealth and in opportunities, in short, a purely materialistic people alone can be reared up, when such a philosophy of the flesh is pursued diligently to live in.

The cause for such a fall in the values of men is being carefully indicated here. It starts with the vain desires. Gross and dangerous desires entertained by a member of the society indicate the lack of education in him in the science of cultural self-development. The desires in the intellect order the types of thoughts in the mind and they, expressed in the outer world, are the very substance of the actions. Naturally, therefore, vain desires give rise to futile thoughts which, when expressed in the world, can produce only sorrow-breeding actions of destruction.

The actions undertaken in the present life leave their impressions on the mind, and order the future desires and thoughts in the individual. Out of vain actions, only negative vāsanās can arise, and they can only thicken the dull-witted stupidities of the intellect. When an individual has lived in this ditch of falsehood and impurity, he cannot but become anything nobler than a monster in the eyes of the wise.

As a contrast to this rākṣasa culture, we are shown how Men of Wisdom feel and act. This dissection of man's bosom reveals to the seekers of self-development, the right attitude they must take and the correct perspective with which they must look at the things of the world.

'The great souled possessed of the divine nature (prakṛti)' of the Self, and desiring for this Infinite in values of return, seek the Immortal by realising the Self, 'through single pointed self application'. They 'know Me to be the origin of all beings'; and those who know the mud to be the origin of all mud pots, cannot fail to see the mud in all pots. So too, the true children of the Hindu culture, who understand the divine principle as the source of all beings, cannot but respect every other member of the society as they would respect themselves. There is no greater and more efficient socialism ever preached in the world. If the present generation is not able to understand and appreciate this spiritual socialism, which is the only panacea for the ills of the world – the reason for it has been already given in the former stanza of this pair now under discussion – it is because of the predominance of the forces of asuras in us.

"The great souled ones worship Me with the single pointed mind" ... how?

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढव्रताः।
नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ॥ १४ ॥

satataṁ kīrtayanto māṁ yatantaśca dṛḍhavratāḥ,
namasyantaśca māṁ bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate. (14)

सततम् - always; कीर्तयन्तः - glorifying; माम् - Me; यतन्तः - striving; च - and; दृढव्रताः - firm in vows; नमस्यन्तः - prostrating; च - and; माम् - Me; भक्त्या - with devotion; नित्ययुक्ताः - always steadfast; उपासते - worship

14. Always glorifying Me, striving, firm in vows, prostrating before Me, and always steadfast, they worship Me with devotion.

Even though in the previous stanza while describing the high-souled ones, the path of Knowledge was indicated[1], here the other two main paths of self-integration and self-development are hinted as (a) single pointed devotion and (b) selfless activity undertaken in the true yajña spirit.

Glorifying Me always: The grossest practice of this is the general noisy crowd singing the Lord's glories with the accompaniment of equally noisy and crude instruments. But the implication of kīrtanam is much more sacred. Indeed,

[1] Knowing Me to be the origin of beings, and immutable.

to adore an ideal with reverence and devotion, and to sing His glories, at all times continuously, is the silent act of a mind that has been fully opened up to appreciate the ideal that one has learnt to glorify. The silent adoration of society by the social workers, or the steady flow of love that beams out from a Man of Knowledge for the entire kingdom of the living, constitute the greatest and a more potent type of kīrtanam, than the noisy crowds that assemble from their different fields of dubious activities, for a short period each day, only to return back to the same dens of vices, after the bhajanam!!

Striving with firm resolve: These are the simple logical facts that are generally overlooked by the seekers and they come to dig the graves for their own successes in spiritual practices. The generality of the folk believe that some specific routine acts of devotional flavour, if pursued physically for a short period of time on particular days of the week, they have done their part of the game. The rest is for their imaginary Gods to cook and bring in front of them, dressed to taste. This absurd, superstitious idea has nothing to do with the science of self-perfection, of which religion forms the technical part.

Constant and awareful effort is unavoidable if an individual is to get himself hauled out, from his present ruts of wrong thinking and false evaluations of life and things. The disharmony he experiences in life, and the wrong notes that are sung by the situations in life upon the harp of his heart are all due to the maladjustments in the instruments of experience in the individual. To readjust them calls

for continuous vigilance, nonstop self application, and sincere pursuit.

And, while thus striving for the self redemption, no doubt, vascillations caused by instinctive biological temptations would often reach the seeker to whisper in his ears and make him eat the 'forbidden fruit'. At such moments of severe temptations, he must discover in himself a firm resolve (dṛḍhavrataḥ)[1] to reject the false and to walk steadily the path of the Real.

Bowing down to Me in devotion: One of the unconscious blasphemies that even the faithful Hindu, in spite of himself, practises is the false namaskāras. No other term has been so badly misunderstood in Hinduism as 'to bow' to the elders or to the Lord. As it is now practised, it would look as if the seemingly devoted have a malicious intention of catching at the feet of a moving Master only to make him fall forward with head on.

Prostration, though it be a physical act, implies the detachment and surrender of all the false identifications in the devotee with his own matter-envelopments. The significance of the symbolism has been totally forgotten and the empty act is continued: surely, by sowing the chaff no crop can be harvested.

True devotion is love supreme. Love is measured in terms of the lover's identification with the beloved. 'Devotion to Me, the origin of beings, and the Immutable' is

[1] Dṛḍha-vrataḥ – ibid stanza

the way for the deluded ego to identify itself with the Self. And this is brought to a successful culmination only by the process of detaching itself from its not-Self conditionings. This negative aspect of self withdrawal from the layers of the not-Self is indicated by the 'bowing down to Me'. The positive side of the art of Self-realisation is pursued, when, with a steady single pointed mind, the seeker comes to insist upon till, ultimately, he rediscovers for himself his own total identification with the Self. This positive aspect is indicated by the phrase 'in devotion'.

The process of withdrawing ourselves from our misconceived identities and the final rediscovery of our infinite potentialities, through our constant devotion to the Self, can be achieved only by the one among us who 'is steadfast and worships Me'.

The path of Knowledge knows no flower-throwing or candana-sprinkling or laddū showing methods of ritualistic worship. To keep in the mind an alert and vigilant flow of thoughts in our adoration for the nature of the Self as the substratum of the entire universe and the essence in all beings, is the truest of worships that can open up the buds of our egocentric lives into blossoms of God-men, wafting their fragrance of perfection around.

If we were to merely accept the usual word meaning and consider only the direct implication of the stanza, we can say that the verse advises a synthesis of yoga, inasmuch as, it encourages bhakti and karma. In the previous verses, we had already pointed out that it has suggested the path of

Knowledge (jñātvā). It is only too true to say that the *Gītā*, as a practical handbook of instructions for every man who seeks perfection in himself, takes a very scientific view of the entire technique and therefore, advises a perfect synthesis of the physical, mental and intellectual personalities in man, through the paths of karma, bhakti and jñāna.

So also:

ज्ञानयज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते ।
एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ॥ १५ ॥

jñānayajñena cāpyanye yajanto māmupāsate
ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham. (15)

ज्ञानयज्ञेन - with the wisdom sacrifice; च - and; अपि - also; अन्ये - others; यजन्तः - sacrificing; माम् - Me; उपासते - worship; एकत्वेन - as one; पृथक्त्वेन - as distinct; बहुधा - in various ways; विश्वतोमुखम् - the all faced

15. Others also, offering the 'wisdom-sacrifice' worship Me in various ways, regarding Me as the one, as the distinct, as the manifold Me, who in all forms, face up everywhere.

The term jñāna-yajña cannot easily come within the accommodation of the English phraseology. The matrix of the language breaks when such significant ideas are to be expressed in an equally crisp style as that of the Sanskrit. A heavy key cannot be placed in a hanging cobweb, or at least we should not expect it to stay there!

Yajña means an offering, an oblation thrown into the sacred altar of fire in a spirit of sacrifice for the invocation and the propitiation of the deity. From this ritualism the term jñāna-yajña has been coined, and it is generally translated by hasty compilers and cheap paṇḍitas, as the 'Sacrifice of

Knowledge.' The abominable misunderstanding that has resulted from such a misuse is immense. Here the implication is that for the purposes of invoking the right Knowledge, the false misconception in us along with their roots in our negative tendencies, are to be ploughed out, dried with dispassion and they must be thrown into the rising flames of the newly invoked right Knowledge. The destruction of ignorance (ajñāna), with the fires of Knowledge (jñāna) is called the jñāna-yajña, the Knowledge-sacrifice, wherein the sacrifice is qualified by Knowledge : just as in terms like fire-sacrifice, land-gift-sacrifice[1] work-gift-sacrifice,[2] and so on.

Jñāna-yajña has no ritualism. It is a constant attempt, on the part of the performer, to see in and through the experienced names and forms, the expression and vitality of the one Conscious Principle, the Self. The seeker here, practising jñāna-yajña has understood the significance of the assertion of Vedānta that the immutable Self pervades all, penetrating everything, and, in Its homogeneous web of existence, It holds together the phenomenal multiplicity and their variegated interactions.

Chocolates made by different firms, irrespective of their shapes and colours, flavours and prices, are all chocolates and therefore, their essential nature of sweetness is common to all of them; and the child who is seeking the sweetness of the chocolates will enjoy them, whatever be their shape, the size or the packing.

[1] bhūdāna yajña

[2] śramadāna yajña

Similarly, a seeker of the Self watches for, observes and detects the expression of the Self in all forms and names, in all situations and conditions. Whatever be the setting in which some diamond bits are held together, to a diamond merchant, all of them are so many heavy points of brilliance and light, and he evaluates them for the weight of light contents in each one of them and not for the design or proportion of the ornament.

To a true musician, who has an ear for melody, it is immaterial whether the singer is a cowherd urchin, sitting on the grassy banks of some stagnant pool, singing on a wild reed, or is he a decorated court musician, sitting in a palace chamber, luxuriously laid with the costliest carpets of the world and singing on the finest and the best-made instruments. For one who is a lover of good music, and who seeks the thrilled hush of joy that he experiences when he gets wafted away from the ephemeral upon the beams of a melodious tune, artistically executed, to him there is a melody in the cooing of the birds, in the humming of the beetles, in the croaking of the frogs, in the running streams, in the roaring oceans – even in the passing breeze, as it rustles along the naked branches of the autumn trees.

A Man of Realisation moves about the world, seeking his own Self, expressed through every moment and action, word and thought that clusters round him at all times at every hand. Just as one light in the midst of a thousand mirrors comes to provide crores of reflections everywhere, so too, the one centered in the Self, when he walks out into the world, sees everywhere his own Self dancing and shooting glances at him from all around at once, thrilling him always with the homogeneous ecstasy of perfection and bliss.

In the winking of the eyes, in the smile of a friend, in the grin of an enemy, in the harsh words of jealousy and in the soft words of love, in heat and cold, in success and failure; among men, among animals, amidst the trees and in the company of the inert, everywhere, he successfully gains the auspicious vision of the Supreme, either as Existence Pure or as Knowledge Absolute or as Bliss Infinite!! This is the meaning of Īśvara-darśanam or the Ātma-darśanam which is sung so gloriously in all the scriptures of the world. To watch for and discover the smile of the Divine through the trellis of names and forms is to live in the constant spirit of jñāna-yajña.

To adore Him in all visions, to recognise Him in all situations, to feel Him with each thought, is to live in a constant remembrance of the Self and, therefore, such people 'worship the Self through the wisdom-sacrifice (jñāna-yajña).'

In the beginning, this attempt of seeing the Self is a conscious act, not without its unpleasant strain. But as the seeker develops, in his own spiritual cognition of the Self, the Awareness Divine in his within, it becomes easy for him to recognise the one Self splashing Itself upon the myriad forms of Its own effulgent glory: 'Me, who in all forms face up everywhere'.

The Man of Realisation not only experiences the pure Self, uncontaminated by the pluralistic equipments, but, also recognises the same Self as playing through the endless variety of conditionings available in the universe. Having known the one sun in the sky, even if we see a thousand

reflections of the same in different equipments, in all of them, we see and recognise only the one sun.

Self-realisation in Vedānta is not at all complete if the Realised one can keep his composure and equanimity only in solitude and silence; if he recognises and experiences the Divine only at some rare moments of his transcendental experiences, then he is not the Man of Wisdom glorified by the ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads. This is not the way of the yogīs. A Man of true Knowledge is he to whom the Self alone is the Truth within, without, and everywhere. 'The One pervades all and nothing pervades It.' To him, a marketplace of the busiest tension is as much a conducive place for cognising the Self as the quiet Himalayan valleys and their deep caves of roaring silence. With his eyes closed or shut, he, from the balcony of the Infinite in himself, gazes out to experience nothing but his own Self everywhere.

It does not mean that there is any sanction in the stupid myth that is being nourished among us that a Man of Realisation, as he gazes out into the world, for him the names and forms melt into thin vapour, the walls disappear from the gaze, and the worlds whirl around him to dissolve into nothingness. This is absurd. The fact that such trash is being broadcast even by some of the responsible men and institutions, and that there are paṇḍitas who nod their assent to them, shows the desperate condition of the fall that the science of Truth has come to suffer in the general decadence of the culture.

In my legs as well as in my hands, I pervade equally at all moments. I know, I am there. To say that this knowledge

makes my hands and legs disappear, as mist disappears at sunrise, is a ridiculous lunacy and not the assertion of a true science. Just as I permeate, fill in, exist, enjoy and experience in and through every little portion of my body, all through my waking hours, at one and the same time, so too, the Man of Realisation realises that at all times, his own Self permeates the entire 'district' constituting the universes, in His infinite domain, 'as one, as distinct, as manifold.'

Vedānta preaches the recognition of divinity and the experience of the Infinite in and through the life. It is not a passing fancy experience lived through during one accidental moment on a bright afternoon and gone, never more to come back again! It is not an occasion to be celebrated by distributing laddūs[1] and then to retire forever, far from that experience! Just as the knowledge acquired by an individual through his own education keeps him constant company, at all times and in all conditions, even in his dream, even so, nay, much more powerfully, much more intimately, much more irredeemably, 'the knower of the Self becomes the Self'; there is no doubt about it. The truth of this roar of Vedānta is upheld by the very assertion in the second line: 'Me, the all-formed, they worship, as one, as distinct and as facing everywhere, in each form'.

All that we have so far said is being endorsed here. No doubt, through meditation, when the mind is stilled, the pure Self, the One without a second, is lived. The knower of the mud can easily recognise the mud in all pots; the shape, size and colour of the pots do not destroy the mud. Similarly, the

[1] An Indian sweetmeat traditionally distributed on celebrations.

apparent and delusory names and forms, superimposed upon the Truth, cannot and do not veil the Truth from the 'vision' of the Man of Truth. Not only does the seer recognise the Self in each individual separately, but Kṛṣṇa, the upholder of Vedānta, thunders out that the Truth is recognised in 'each form, as facing everywhere'. It is absurd to say that one discovers the essential nature of the pot only on the right hand bottom of the mud pot! The mud is in the pot, facing everywhere, at all times; where the mud is not there the pot is non-existent. When the Self is not there, the perception of the multiple existence is never possible.

If, in a variety of forms, different types of worship are performed, how do they all become the worship of the one Self?

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाहमहमौषधम्।
मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम्॥ १६॥

ahaṁ kraturahaṁ yajñaḥ svadhāhamahamauṣadham,
mantro'hamahamevājyamahamagniraham hutam. (16)

अहम् - I; क्रतुः - sacrifice; अहम् - I; यज्ञः - the sacrifice; स्वधा - the offering (food) to pitṛs (or ancestors); अहम् - I; अहम् - I; औषधम् - medicinal herb and all plants; मन्त्रः - sacred syllable; अहम् - I; अहम् - I; एव - also; आज्यम् - ghee or clarified butter; अहम् - I; अग्निः - fire; अहम् - I; हुतम् - the offering

16. I am the kratu; I am the sacrifice; I am the offering (food) to pitṛs (or ancestors); I am the medicinal herb and all plants; I am the mantra; I am also the clarified butter; I am the fire; I am the oblation.

Repeating the idea already expressed earlier, in a famous stanza of the *Gītā*,[1] this verse expresses how the Self is the existence everywhere in all actions and factors constituting actions. Ritualistic actions constitute the worship. At the time of Arjuna, the divine worship was always undertaken in Vaidika ritualism (kratu), by ritualistic adoration of the

[1] *Gītā* – 4.24

deity as prescribed in the smṛti (yajña), or in the food-offering for the ancestors (svadhā). Arjuna is to be taught that all these methods of worship are, in a sense, nothing but the worship of the Self.

Not only that the different ritualistic prescriptions are all presided over by the Self, but the medicinal herbs (auṣadham) used in the sacrifice, the ghee (ājya - clarified butter) poured into the altar of fire, the oblations (hutam) offered, the fire (agni) that is invoked, the mantras chanted all of them are nothing but the Self alone expressed through different equipments in different fields. When a variety of ornaments are made from a mass of gold, the gold can certainly say "I am the pendant, I am the ringlet, I am the chain, I am its shine, I am its hook, I alone am its shape and its glory". Similarly, the Self being the essence of all happenings and circumstances in which the devotee attempts to adore the Eternal, this assertion here is perfectly true to all philosophic minded readers.

Again:

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः।
वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च ॥ १७ ॥

pitāhamasya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ,
vedyaṁ pavitramoṅkāra ṛksāma yajureva ca. (17)

पिता- father; अहम् - I; अस्य - of this; जगतः - the world; माता - mother; धाता - sustainer; पितामहः - grandsire; वेद्यम् - the (one) thing to be known; पवित्रम् - the purifier; ओङ्कारः - the syllable Om; ऋक् - Ṛk; साम - Sāma; यजुः - Yajuḥ; एव - also; च - and

17. I am the father of this world, the mother, the sustainer and the grandsire; the (one) thing to be known, the purifier, (the syllable) Om, and also the Ṛk, the Sāma and the Yajus also.

The Self is not a vague imperceptible spirit of existence in all fields of activities divine – sans emotion, sans relationship, sans qualities. In order to show that there is an ardour of love that permeates the very essence of the Self everywhere, the finite relationships of the world are borrowed to indicate the mass of love that the Self is. 'I am the father, the mother, the sustainer, the grandsire, the purifier of the worlds.'

If there be thus a Self, why should a seeker seek to know It? There are orphans in the world who have never seen or known their parents, and perhaps, never known who sustains them or who educates them, and yet their lives

are not incomplete. The ignorance of one's originator and sustainer is not a great obstacle to one's full life in the world outside. Why, in the spiritual life, a seeker should try to realise the Truth which is no doubt, the originator of all and the sustainer of the entire universe?

The verse insists, 'I am the one thing to be known' and this is the repeated assertion in all the scriptures. The Self is 'That, having known which, everything else becomes known'. To know the Self is to escape the consciousness of imperfection, the existence finite, and the sorrows poignant. To live in the ego as a mere embodied self, is to live self-exiled from all the divine potentialities that one is heir to. To rediscover this infinite beatitude is the only satisfying end and goal of life, where alone an awakened intellect can discover a heaven of peace and an enduring existence in perfect tranquillity.

The Self, the substratum of the entire living kingdom, is symbolised by the Vaidika mantra called 'Oṅkāra. Life conceived of as the 'flow of constant experiences' should be the sum total of all experiences in each one of us during our waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. The substratum for these three states and their experiences must be something other than these three, inasmuch as the rider is always different from the ridden, the container is different from the contained. The substratum is different from the superimpositions upon It.

This fourth state, supporting and embracing the three ordinary states of consciousness in every one of us,

is termed as turīya[1] by the Upaniṣad seers. The one symbol representing all these four states is called 'Oṅkāra, and naturally, therefore, the ultimate indicated by Om, is the Self, conceived of, for the purposes of worship, as Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

The Self is the Essence indicated by Om, and this Absolute Reality is the one theme, tacitly expressed, or implicitly implied, in all the Vedas, and therefore, it is said 'I am also the Ṛk, Sāma and Yajus'. It is to be noticed here that the compiler of the Vedas, Vyāsa, in the *Gītā* recognises only the three earlier Vedas, and not the *Atharvaṇa-veda* wherein the discussions on engineering and such other secular sciences preponderate.

[1] Refer discourses on *Māṇḍūkya and Kārikā* – Mantra 7

Further:

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत्।
प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ॥ १८ ॥

gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṁ suhṛt,
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ nidhānaṁ bījamavyayam. (18)

गतिः - the goal; भर्ता - the supporter; प्रभुः - the Lord; साक्षी - the witness; निवासः - the abode; शरणम् - the shelter; सुहृत् - the friend; प्रभवः - the origin; प्रलयः - the dissolution; स्थानम् - the foundation; निधानम् - the treasure house; बीजम् - the seed; अव्ययम् - imperishable

18. I am the goal, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the shelter, the friend, the origin, the dissolution, the foundation, the treasure house and the seed imperishable.

Continuing the theme of the status of the Self as the very essence behind the seeming plurality of the world, recognised in our ignorance and, in fact, nothing but a dreamy superimposition gathering its existence from the Reality behind it; the Lord defends Himself with a host of suggestive words strung together to form this exquisite verse, pregnant and full, for all the students of meditation.

I am the goal (gatiḥ): Inasmuch as all our seeking ends when all imperfections vanish in the total experience of the Perfect. To the one, frightened by the vision of a

delusory serpent, consolation and satisfaction can come only when his delusion has ended by the discovery of the rope. The Self is the substratum of the sorrow-ridden universe of multiplicity; to realise the Self is to transcend all the choking sense of limitations. The Knowledge Absolute by gaining which all becomes known, is shown here as the Self.

I am the supporter (bhartā): Just as the desert supports the illusory pool of water, which the thirsty traveller in his delusion recognises, so too, the Self is the supporter of everything. As absolute existence It lends a semblance of reality to the perceptions of the sense organs, and thus holds together the flood of change into a consistent pattern, called the life.

I am the Lord (Prabhuḥ): Even though the Self thus lends Its grace to the realm of imperfections sustained and maintained by the agitations of the mind, It, as the pure awareness, is ever beyond the sorrows and joys of the apparent and delusory universe. Through different equipments electricity may pass, manifesting different expressions of its own glory, but in none of them electricity loses itself, if we consider the current as pure energy.

I am the witness (sākṣī): In all these panorama of expressions, the Self, though It lends existence to them, Itself remains as a mere witness. He is considered a true witness of an incident, who is not in the incident, but who happened to witness it, not from too afar, with neither any attachment nor any aversion towards what it looked at. When things happen, of their own accord in one's

presence, then one becomes the witness of that happening. The Infinite is but a witness of the finite inasmuch as the Self is an uninterested illuminator of what is happening in the harem of the intellect, in the arena of the mind, in the courtyard of the body, and in the wide expanse of the world without.

I am the abode (nivāsaḥ): Truth is the house of all, of every being and thing. On an innocent wayside post, it is reported that some travellers saw a grinning ghost, others a smiling ghost, and yet others, a ghost with a bleeding mouth and sparkling eyes, naked and horrid, and some an innocent ghost, dressed in white, invitingly smiling and lovingly guiding them on the right track. All of them saw the delusory projections of their own individual minds upon the same wayside post. Naturally, the post is the 'Abode' of the smiling, of the grinning, of the bleeding, of the horrid and of the tender ghost that different minds on different occasions, projected upon the same post. Similarly, wherever our equipments of experiences gain the apprehension of the pluralistic phenomena, for all of them the Self, the Awareness, is the abode, the place of existence and security.

I am the refuge (śaraṇam): Delusion breeds sorrows, Knowledge emanates joy. The universe is pain-ridden because it is delusion-projected. Naturally, the harbour of tranquillity, protecting a confused ego from the mountainous breakers of the open stormy ocean of saṁsāra is the rediscovery of the substratum, the essence, the Self. When once the Self gets individualised, when It walks out in Its own glory to identify with and play through the

equipments – the intellect, mind and body It is wandering away from Its safety of the shore into the stormy, high seas of adventure. The frail boat of the ego when thus threatened from all sides – the darkening clouds above, the bumping sea below, and the screaming storms all round – the sailor's only refuge is to come back to the tranquil harbour, the Self!

The above descriptions put together add up to give the conception of the Reality as a heartless noumenon, a dignified deity, an unapproachable realm of Perfection, afar and impossible that lies at a crude point of disgustful distance. To wipe off this idea from the tender heart of emotional seekers, Arjuna was one, the Eternal in the form of a beloved friend of man, Kṛṣṇa, is using here more humane terms in defining Himself.

'I am the friend' (suhṛt): The Infinite is a friend of the finite, not a nodding acquaintance – from whom you can borrow a matchbox, he will give, smile and move off – but an all out friend, whose only anxiety is for the security and the well-being of the befriended.

I am the origin and dissolution, the substratum, the storehouse: As gold in all ornaments, as mud in all pots, the Self is in the universe, and therefore, all things can come to manifestation and dissolve into the unmanifest only from and in the substratum, which can hence be considered as the 'the storehouse' of all names, forms and qualities that constitute the multiple world.

I am the immutable seed (bījamavyayam): There is a contrast here with all other seeds, where, in all cases, the

seeds perish while they germinate and produce the trees. The Self is, no doubt, the origin of the 'tree of saṁsāra', but in the production of this, the Self is not transformed, It being ever immutable. The idea of the eternal Principle, modifying Itself to become the created world, is a disgrace to the logic of human thinking, and Vedānta discards such a philosophically fallacious notion. The non-dualists, however, are compelled to take it up, or else, the very edifice of their arguments will crumble down like castles of clouds, built upon an autumnal sky.

This, as we have already indicated, is a verse replete with simple terms, each an avenue for the meditator to reflect upon, and in a pleasant stroll reach up to the gateway of Truth.

Further:

तपाम्यहमहं वर्षं निगृह्णाम्युत्सृजामि च।
अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च सदसच्चाहमर्जुन॥ १९॥

tapāmyahamahaṁ varṣaṁ nigṛhṇāmyutsṛjāmi ca,
amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyuśca sadasaccāhamarjuna. (19)

तपामि - give heat; अहम् - I; अहम् - I; वर्षम् - rain; निगृह्णामि - withhold; उत्सृजामि - send forth; च - and; अमृतम् - immortality; च - and; एव - also; मृत्युः - death; च - and; सत् - existence; असत् - non-existence; च - and; अहम् - I; अर्जुन - O Arjuna

19. (As sun) I give heat; I withhold and send forth the rain; I am immortality and also death, both existence and non-existence, O Arjuna.

To indicate that the Self is the essence not only in the equipments of worship and in the acts divine, but also that it is the ruling factor and the Essence Absolute behind all phenomenal objects and happenings in the universe, this stanza is given.

I give heat: The electricity can rightly say that it gives heat in the heater, light in the bulb, cold in the refrigerator, because, electricity conditioned through those equipments expresses itself in the manifestations as the above-mentioned, heat, light and cold. Similarly, the Self, the one existence,

identifying with the phenomenon called the sun becomes the source of all heat for the entire universe.

I withhold and send forth rain: Not only do the modern meteorologists understand the influence which the sun has upon the climatic conditions of the world, but the great ṛṣis of old too, had a perfect knowledge of the ways and behaviours of nature, and had well understood that the position, condition and nature of the sun determined the climate that comes to bless or curse the world. The influence of the sun controls the fields of experience of every living creature on the globe, since it controls the climatic conditions. If the sun were to send out a few more degrees of heat, the entire flora and fauna of the world must change. So too, will be the transformation, complete and total, of the entire look of the world, if the sun were to withhold even a few calories of the heat that it is emitting out now. Immediately, there would be a march from the north pole and the south pole towards the equator, driving men and beings towards the central belt of the globe, causing more intense sorrows of overpopulation and lack of sufficient food!

These imaginary possibilities are here indicated, only to help the student realise the scientific truth that is at the base of this passage, which a modern man, in his vanity of knowledge, might ignore as a poetic exaggeration. It is to be noted very carefully, that the ṛṣis expressed even scientific truths in their instinctive language of poetry in all our ancient literature. Nowhere else in the world had any people ever tried in the history of mankind, to express precise sciences as physics or chemistry, medicine or mathematics, in metrical composition as the Āryans had done.

I am immortality and also death: If life were not illumining experiences, it would become meaningless and purposeless, and the Self, being the spark of life, is the essential stuff that gives a realistic experience of existence to the very phenomenon of death. To realise the Self as the Immutable and the Eternal is to reach the state of immortality. Change is death and, therefore, the phrase is to be understood as saying that 'the Self is the illuminator of change, Itself ever the changeless'.

I am the existence and the non-existence: To perceive and experience 'existence' and 'non-existence', a positive illuminator of both is necessary, and the illuminating Consciousness must be able to embrace both sat and asat in its all-comprehending knowledge. It is impossible to know and gain an experience of the total non-existence; wherever we experience non-existence, we experience it as 'the non-existence that exists'.

Apart from this highly subtle philosophical interpretation claimed by the volcanic logic of the pedantic, there is a simpler significance for the phrase. Sat and asat are terms used in Vedānta to indicate the cause and effect: the unmanifest and the manifest. The Self being that illuminating factor, without which we can experience neither the unmanifest (thoughts) nor the manifest (objects), the Self Eternal is conceived of as the essence in both the manifest and the unmanifest. Without the mud, no pot is possible; with mud all pots can exist; and therefore, the mud can claim: 'I am the pots of all sizes, shapes and colour'.

This stanza can provide a lifetime inspiration to the meditators at their seat of contemplation, while 'barrelling their thoughts' before shooting forth into the voiceless and nameless.[1]

[1] Refer Swamijī's *'Meditation and Life'* (3rd Edition)

Those who devote themselves in the worship of the Eternal with desires, will come to their fulfilment... How?

त्रैविद्या मां सोमपाः पूतपापा-
यज्ञैरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गतिं प्रार्थयन्ते ।
ते पुण्यमासाद्य सुरेन्द्रलोक-
मश्नन्ति दिव्यान्दिवि देवभोगान् ॥ २० ॥

traividyā māṁ somapāḥ pūtapāpā-
yajñairiṣṭvā svargatiṁ prārthayante,
te puṇyamāsādya surendraloka-
maśnanti divyāndivi devabhogān. (20)

त्रैविद्याः - the knowers of the three Vedas; माम् - Me; सोमपाः - the drinkers of soma; पूतपापाः - purified from sin; यज्ञैः - by sacrifices; इष्ट्वा - worshipping; स्वर्गतिम् - way to heaven; प्रार्थयन्ते - pray; ते - they; पुण्यम् - holy; आसाद्य - having reached; सुरेन्द्रलोकम् - the world of the Lord of the gods; अश्नन्ति - enjoy; दिव्यान् - divine; दिवि - in heaven; देवभोगान् - pleasures of the gods

20. The knowers of the three Vedas, the drinkers of soma, purified from sin, worshipping Me by sacrifices, pray for the way to heaven; they reach the holy world of the Lord of the gods and enjoy in heaven the divine pleasures of the gods.

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं-
क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।
एवं त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना-
गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥ २१ ॥

te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokaṁ viśālaṁ-
kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti,
evaṁ trayīdharmamanuprapannā-
gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante. (21)

ते - they; तम् - that; भुक्त्वा - having enjoyed; स्वर्गलोकम् - heaven-world; विशालम् - vast; क्षीणे - at the exhaustion of; पुण्ये - (in) merit; मर्त्यलोकम् - the world of the mortals; विशन्ति - enter; एवम् - thus; त्रयी धर्मम् - of the three (Vedas); अनुप्रपन्ना - abiding by; गत आगतम् - the state of 'going and returning'; काम कामाः - desiring (objects of) desires; लभन्ते - attain

21. They, having enjoyed the vast heaven-world, when their merits are exhausted, enter the world of the mortals; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three (Vedas), desiring (objects of) desires, they attain to the state of 'going and returning' (saṁsāra).

When those who are well-read in the three Vedas and who know the prescriptions laid down for the rituals, perform those sacred acts of devotion and sacrifice with a desire to enjoy the celestial bliss, 'They come to enjoy, in heaven, the divine pleasures of the devas'.

The 'soma' drink is the milky juice of a creeper-plant[1] which is used in the rituals and taken in very small quantities at the end of the function. Thus, the phrase 'drinking the soma-juice' is to be understood as 'when the performance of the ritual has concluded.'[2] These desire prompted ritualisms

[1] Perhaps belonging to the group of ephedra or periploca.

[2] Something equivalent to what we mean, in the modern times, when we say, 'when they finish their small coffee'. We mean 'when the dinner party has come to a close'.

yield their finite results and Kṛṣṇa indicates that these ego-centers, after having enjoyed in the celestial realms, 'they enter the mortal world on exhaustion of their merits'.

The pitiable disgust which the Lord feels for such men and their unintelligent seeking for the finite, is clearly expressed when He concludes how these ritualists, 'Abiding by the injunctions of the three Vedas, desiring desires; they repeatedly come and go'. This passage reminds us of a more severe criticism the Lord had raised earlier[1] against the pursuit of desire-born ritualisms.

[1] *Gītā* – 2. 42 to 45.

What about those men who worship the Eternal with desireless love, as the substratum for the entire universe?

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ २२ ॥

ananyāścintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham. (22)

अनन्याः - without others; चिन्तयन्तः - thinking; माम् - Me; ये - who; जनाः - men; पर्युपासते - worship; तेषाम् - of them; नित्य अभियुक्तानाम् - of ever self-controlled; योग - the supply of what is not already possessed; क्षेमम् - the preservation of what is already possesed; वहामि - secure; अहम् - I

22. To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, to those ever self-controlled, I secure for them that, which is not already possessed (yoga), and preserve for them what they already possess (kṣema).

So far we have been listening to almost half of the *Gītā*. This stanza is sandwiched between the earlier half and the later half of this pregnant discourse on life and its problems. This wondrous book, the incomparable scripture of man, has to provide an explanation for the world and its problems, and must show us the means of winning the goal of success, both here and in the hereafter. The function of a religion is not over, merely because it is explaining the why and the

wherefore of life, and because it indicates a goal, at once Infinite and Transcendental. An enduring religion must also be a complete science of life which should indicate an exhaustive scheme of living the actualities of life and meeting efficiently the day-to-day problems of existence in the world of plurality.

Here is a stanza which, with equal emphasis, discloses a secret by which glorious success can be assured for the spiritual and the material seekers. It is significant that this stanza is almost in the centre of the *Gītā*[1]. We shall try to follow the implications, both spiritual as well as secular, of this stanza, one by one.

This stanza, viewed in the context of a seeker's spiritual practices is, no doubt, a logical conclusion of what has been so far said in the *Gītā*, 'Persons who meditate on Me with undivided heart' – here the term 'ananya' is available for more than one interperation: (a) it can indicate a meaning as 'non-separate,' in which case the term will be qualifying the goal and, therefore, the passage will mean, 'Those who worship the Self, as not separate from their own essential Self'; (b) again, 'ananya' can yield a meaning as 'without any other' in which case the term will be qualifying the mind of the seeker at the time of his worship and, therefore, the meaning will be 'Those who worship Me with all their thoughts' – with an entirely single pointed mind.

[1] The general belief that the verse is in the mathematical centre is evidently false, as it is the 360th stanza out of the total 701 stanzas in the *Gītā*. However, this traditional belief has crept among us and we hear it repeated from all platforms, from all vocal commentators of the *Gītā*.

Those who, with a single pointed mind, thus meditate upon Me as the one and the only Reality behind the entire universe, Kṛṣṇa promises here that 'to them ever self-controlled, I bring yoga and kṣema', meaning more and more spiritual vigour (yoga) and the final experience of beatitude (kṣema) which is Liberation resulting from the yoga fulfilled.

Now, considering it as a tip for men in the marketplace, sweating and toiling in the world, the very same stanza yields a code of secret instructions by which they can assure for themselves complete success in their worldly life. In any undertaking, if a man is capable of pouring out his self-willed thought (saṅkalpa) constantly and with a singleness of purpose, he is sure to succeed. But unfortunately, the ordinary man is not capable of successfully keeping his thoughts in one channel of thinking. His goal seems to be ever receding and flickering. His determination to win a particular goal ever changes, since his goal itself seems to be ever changing. To such a man of haphazard determination, no progress is ever possible in any line of undertaking.

The greatest tragedy of the age seems to be that we ignore the obvious fact that thoughts alone create and not mere activities. Activities gain a potency from the thought-power that feeds them. When the feeding behind is choked and dissipated, the executing power in the external activities becomes feeble in strength and in efficiency. Thoughts, from a single pointed mind, must flow steadily in full inspiration, enthusiasm and vigour towards the determined goal which the individual has chosen for himself to gain in his life.

Mere thinking in itself is not sufficient. No doubt, actions are necessary. Many of the present-day youths, even when they are capable of consistently keeping a goal of life in their viewpoint, they are not ready to get into the field and act as best as they can for the achievement of the same. The term 'upāsanā' means worship. Through worship we invoke the deity, meaning 'the profit potential in any given field'[1] and the prefix 'pari' to this familiar term 'upāsanā', indicates a total effort in which no stone is left unturned in meeting the obstacles of life carving out one's own victories in any given field of endeavour.

So far, two main secret factors were revealed without which success in life is not assured, (a) consistency of willing and thinking, and (b) pouring out ourselves with singleness of purpose in meeting the situation in all its entirety. The second line gives a hint at the third main factor that is unavoidable in the constitution of one who is marked out for spectacular success and brilliant gains in life is (c) self-control.

As an aspiring individual, consistently maintaining his ambition in his mind, when walks out into his fields of activity to battle with its problems, he will meet with many a tempting channel of preoccupation through which he could dissipate himself and get exhausted, rendering himself incapable of conquering the highest. To keep oneself self-controlled, so that he may not himself get derailed, as he shoots forward to reach the temple of his success, is the third great factor that is to be kept in mind and lived fully, in order that success in life be assured.

[1] The yajña spirit in which the actions are to be undertaken as explained in *Gītā* – 4

The terms 'yoga' and 'kṣema' defined as 'the power to gain (yoga), and the power to guard (kṣema)' respectively, by Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary[1], are quite applicable in the context of our discussion. In life, all conflicts and contests, all struggles and sorrows, whatever be the form in which they may appear, always different, from individual to individual, from place to place, and from time to time, all of them can distinctly fall into two groups, as (a) the struggles to gain, and (b) the efforts to guard what have been gained. These two tensions tear into bits the joy and tranquility of life. One who is without these two preoccupations is the luckiest, in the sense that he has gained all that is to be gained; and when these two factors are totally blotted off from one's life, he is dead to the world of sorrows and he is awake to the world of joy imperishable.

It is promised here by the Lord that to the one who is capable of maintaining the three factors described above, and pursues them diligently, to him there need not be either anxiety to gain, or the worry to guard, because, these two responsibilities will be voluntarily undertaken by the Lord Himself. Here the term Lord may be understood as the Law behind the world of plurality and all the happenings therein. When water is let out from a height for purposes of irrigating the lower planes, we have only to allow the water to flow in the right direction to reach the required area and nature itself will carry it down, for, it is the 'law of nature' that water always flows seeking for a lower level. Similarly

[1] 'Yogaḥ aprāptasya prāpaṇam, Kṣemaḥ tad-rakṣaṇam' ... Śaṅkarācārya

here, to one who is working, fulfilling in himself the three great laws pertaining to the physical, mental and intellectual disciplines, to him success need not be a consideration at all, for, victory shall dog the heels of such a mighty ruler of circumstances.

Opening up a new section, to discuss the misguided worshippers, who adore at the altars of the deities that preside over finite material gains, the following is said:

येऽप्यन्यदेवता भक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः।
तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम्॥ २३॥

ye'pyanyadevatā bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ,
te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajantyavidhipūrvakam. (23)

ये - who; अपि - even; अन्यदेवता - other gods; भक्ताः - devotees; यजन्ते - worship; श्रद्धया - with faith; अन्विताः - endowed; ते - they; अपि - also; माम् - Me; एव - alone; कौन्तेय - O son of Kuntī; यजन्ति - worship; अविधिपूर्वकम् - by the wrong method.

23. Even those devotees, who, endowed with faith, worship other gods, worship Me alone, O son of Kuntī, (but) by the wrong method .

All the people in the world do not worship at the same altar. Not only that this is physically impossible, but it is psychologically absurd, since tastes differ from person to person.

The devotees at their respective worship at the different altars, adore the same vitality that is the substratum for the created world of change. Even when they do worship different deities, when their devotion is sufficiently reinforced with perfect faith, they too are invoking nothing but the one eternal Truth expressed through the forms of their adoration.

When once we accept the infinite Reality as 'One without a second' remaining the same in the past, present, and future, it is evidently clear that the Self, as Consciousness, that expressed through the equipments of all saints and sages, prophets and incarnations of the past, is one and the same, whatever be the clime in which they happened to be born and function among their people at their time .

Toleration is the very breath of the Hindu creed. We have already discussed earlier how non-dualists, accepting the Absolute as infinite, cannot but be tolerant and intolerance is the very bread and butter of those who accept a single prophet as God and the Ultimate. Even among Hindus, all those who worship as members of a particular creed or a sect, are generally found to be unrelenting fanatics and some crude examples are even noticed where the devotee of one deity believes that to raise blasphemies against the deities of others is adoration of his own beloved Lord. These are mere perversions, obnoxious and vulgar, which have no sanction in the bible of the Hindus or anywhere in the cultural tradition initiated by the ṛṣis.

The large-heartedness and endless love in the heart of Kṛṣṇa makes him declare here that 'they too, worship Me alone even though by wrong methods'.

The stanza, viewed as an instruction for the external life in the workaday world, suggests that, instead of seeking the infinite profit of the bliss of Selfhood, those devotees who are trying to invoke other limited gains in the different fields of human activity, they too are seeking to invoke the grace of the Self, only 'by the wrong methods'.

Even the most sensuous, when he is planning to earn, to save and to spend so that he may procure, possess and enjoy the sensuous object, he is also invoking the dormant capacities that lie in the Self in him. Sans Self none will be able to act either negatively or positively. Even in the act of suicide preparing his death, he is invoking the life, inasmuch as, even in the act of raising a weapon against himself, he is misusing the grace of the manifested life in him.

In this context, the phrase 'by the wrong methods' only indicates that they are wrong means, because ultimately it leads the seekers to the wells of dejection and sorrow that lie in the darkness of the not-Self, instead of leading to the bliss of Perfection which is the nature of the Self.

Why do we call their methods as 'against what the law ordains?'

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च।
न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥ २४ ॥

ahaṁ hi sarvayajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhureva ca,
na tu māmabhijānanti tattvenātaścyavanti te. (24)

अहम् - I; हि - verily; सर्वयज्ञानाम् - of all sarifices; भोक्ता - enjoyer; च - and; प्रभुः - the Lord; एव - alone; च - and; न - not; तु - but; माम् - Me; अभिजानन्ति - know; तत्त्वेन - in essence; अतः - hence; च्यवन्ति - fall; ते - they

24. (For) I alone am the enjoyer in and the Lord of all sacrifices; but they do not know Me in essence, and hence they fall (return to this mortal world).

To explain why these methods are 'against what the law ordains (avidhipūrvakam)', and why pursuers of these wrong methods fall – meaning, return to the world of men when they have finished enjoying the ephemeral joys which are the rewards for the merits acquired by them through their ritualism – this stanza is given here.

In all ritualistic sacrifices, the Self alone is 'the enjoyer and the Lord'. It is the Self, in one form or the another, expressing some special power or other, that forms the different deities, for the invocation of whom the various sacrifices are performed by the seekers for their grace. Here the Lord says "I am the immutable Reality that is behind

all the deities that are invoked during every sacrifice with faith and devotion, be it in a temple or a church, in a mosque or a synagogue. But because they invoke 'limited potentials in Me' (devatās) they do not come to realise 'My infinite glory revelling as their Self' and, therefore, bumping from one worship to another, they slip down to fall into delusory confusions and endless entanglements".

Applying it in life, in all fields of activity wherein men strive (yajña), they are invoking some finite profit or the other (deity), and do not strive to improve culturally and come to rediscover the Self as their own essential nature and therefore treading on the slippery slopes of sensuality, they fall in to the levels of brutal animalism and prove themselves a disgrace to the dignity and status of manhood.

Complete happiness and satisfaction, perfect contentment and peace; lie only in the innermost walls of the bosom and not in the extrovert fields of profit and success, glory and fame. Not understanding this enduring profit that lies in the immediate within of each bosom, men, bitten by a thousand scorpions of desires, run rabid bringing about chaos and sorrows not only to themselves but also to others walking the same road. Necessarily when a generation of such deluded people come to live, freely encouraging their own mental weaknesses and never caring to pause and estimate their own profits, the history of that period can be written only upon the face of a blasted world with the very blood of the killed and the maimed – diluted to taste with the tears of the bereaved mothers and widows! Indeed, they return to fall back to the sorrows of the mortals (cyavanti te).

How can we say that even those who are invoking the Eternal by methods which the law does not ordain come to enjoy their certain fruits? ... Listen:

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्पितॄन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम्॥ २५॥

yānti devavratā devānpitṝnyānti pitṛvratāḥ,
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām. (25)

यान्ति - go; देवव्रताः - worshippers of the devas or gods; देवान् - to the devas; पितॄन् - to the pitṛs; यान्ति - go; पितृव्रताः - worshippers of the pitṛs; भूतानि - to the bhūtas; यान्ति - go; भूतेज्याः - worshippers of the bhūtas; यान्ति - go; मद्याजिनः - My worshippers; अपि - also; माम् - to Me

25. The worshippers of the devas or gods go to the devas; to the pitṛs or ancestors go the ancestor worshippers; to the bhūtas or the elements go the worshippers of the bhūtas; but My worshippers come to Me.

It is an eternal principle in life that as you think so you become. The thoughts maintained by an individual defines him for the future periods of his life. The thoughts entertained at a given moment get themselvs crystallised to form a blueprint for the individual's character formation in the days to come. This is a fact, very well realisable to everyone in his own life. Applying this natural law of psychology in the field of spiritual self-development, Lord Kṛṣṇa says: "Votaries of

the devas go to the devas" and so on. The worshippers of the devas, ancestors (pitṛs), and the elements (bhūtas), as a result of their worship and adoration with single pointed mind for a sufficiently long time, come to attain the fruition of their constant meditation.

In the old style, commentators would explain that the devotee of a particular deity reaches to an experience where he can come to live the citizenship in his Lord's own world. This constricted explanation throws a veil of mystery over the stanza. A much more liberal interpretation can easily carry to us a more deeper conviction.

Devas, we have seen, represent in our individual life the various sense organs, through the activities of which we experience the world. To indicate the work done, by the term denoting the instrument with which the work is executed, is rather too common in life. To axe, to scissor, to knife, to spanner, to steer, to pen, and so on, are examples wherein the name of the instrument is used to indicate the work done by it. Similarly, here also, the plural noun 'devas' may be taken to mean the entire field of all physical experiences. Those who are courting the external world of joys and successes consistently and with the required amount of devotion, they come to gain that field of their demanded experience.

The term 'pitṛ' means ancestors. It is the belief that the dead, in order to enjoy the merits which they had acquired in their individual life, living through a consistent and devoted life of the ordained karmas, on leaving their physical embodiments retire for a limited period to a realm of bliss and joy called the 'world of ancestors'. After enjoying there

for a period of time, at the exhaustion of their acquired merits, they are traditionally believed to come down again to the mortal world. This conception is insisted upon by the orthodox commentators but in reading such a meaning into this stanza the larger imports of the *Gītā*, as a textbook of instruction for cultivation of a higher culture, are sadly lost.

Accepting the term 'pitṛ' as denoting the 'ancestors', 'votaries of ancestors', would mean persons enthusiastically alive to the cultural purity and tradition of their ancients, and who are striving to live up to those ideals. Such an individual, who is constantly endeavouring to live up to the ancient cultural tradition of the spiritual India, as a result of his constant self application, he comes to gain the beauty and the shine of the exquisite life of purity and perfection.

'The worshippers of bhūtas reach the bhūtas' is a line which is usually known as explaining the lower spiritual practice called 'Prakṛti Laya' indicated in our textbook. This extremely technical meaning, read into this phrase, again destroys the magnitude of application of the *Gītā* as a book for man's redemption.

The ancient seers of our land did not overlook the fact that apart from the spiritual aims, in any society, there was also a life of active scientific enquiry and repeated discoveries that were possible among the folds of mother nature's own garments. The active quest in the field of objective sciences is a part of man's hunt for knowledge and, therefore, the worshippers of the 'bhūtas', are the secular scientists who try to observe, codify and systematise the observed knowledge of physical nature and behaviours of

things and beings as it is now done under such classifications as physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, botany, engineering, agriculture, politics, sociology, geography, history, geology, and so on; an endless array of specialised lines of investigation, adopted, pursued and accepted by the modern world. Almost a large portion of the *Atharvaṇa-veda* gave us the accepted theories of nature and its behaviour, as finally conceived of by the ṛṣis of that time. The psychological theory, which Kṛṣṇa is observing here, is applicable to all branches of human endeavour, that, if one were to pursue diligently in courting nature even in the secular field, success is assured in direct proportion to the amount of self application put forth by the seeker.

Thus, if consistency of meditation upon the devas yields the devas; if constant meditation upon the ancestors takes us to our ancestral heritage; and if diligent self application in the fields of intellectual enquiry (bhūtas) can ultimately assure us a positive success in ripping open the secret vaults of nature, then, under the same principle, we are assured that, 'My votaries come unto Me'. By constant meditation, with a single pointed mind, upon the nature of the Self, the meditator can, in the long run, successfully discover his total identity with the Self, eternal and immutable. In our elementary textbooks on Vedānta, this technique of the ego's constant meditation on the Self and ultimately its becoming to be the divine Self has been indicated by comparing it with the progress by which a worm is transformed as a buffer by the buffer-bee[1].

[1] Bhramara-kīṭa-nyāya.

Earlier Arjuna was advised upon the necessity of developing a single pointed attention, ere he could start his cultural rehabilitation. With the concentration so developed, through the different methods indicated, the Lord suggested how Arjuna should strive to maintain his mind, even while diligently working in the field of his worldly duties, keeping himself in the constant remembrance of the Lord. A mere student of philosophy may wonder at the efficacy of such a simple technique of yoga especially when the student is fed upon the misunderstood overemphasis upon tapas and meditation, as explained in the Vaidika lore. The attempt of the *Gītā* is to give, not only the jñāna but it is to supply the vijñāna also. In order to convince the student that this elementary technique can take the seeker to the highest achievements, this stanza is given. Just as consistent pursuit with all dedicated self application brings, in the end, sure success in all fields of activity of art or science, so too, in the realm of the within and ultimately in the field of spiritual achievements, constant meditation will definitely pay. The logic behind this assuring belief is given here by the Lord.

Can mere worship with devoted thoughts, however sincere, bring about such an absolute success? Is it not necessary that we should pursue all the elaborate rituals that the Vedas prescribe, and often seem to insist upon? ... Listen:

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ २६ ॥

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati,
tadahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ. (26)

पत्रम् - a leaf; पुष्पम् - a flower; फलम् - a fruit; तोयम् - water; यः - who; मे - to me; भक्त्या - with devotion; प्रयच्छति - offers; तत् - that; अहम् - I; भक्ति उपहृतम् - offered with devotion; अश्नामि - accept; प्रयत् आत्मनः - by the pure minded

26. Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that I accept, offered by the pure minded with devotion.

There is no religion in the world which does not recognise and encourage offerings by the devotees. The modern educated man is rather surprised as to why the infinite Lord, in all religions, needs insignificant things like a spoon of oil for His lamp, or a candle, or even an edifice to house Himself, be it a church, a mosque, or a temple. Dreary intellects, poisoned with their own misunderstanding, have even come shamelessly to insist that these houses of Gods should be

converted into hospitals and schools, lunatic asylums and maternity homes![1]

But I believe that I am talking to a world which has not come to this depth of depravity. Not yet. In a society where there is still the play of healthy hearts and virulent intellects, there is certainly a need for temples and worship. And in these houses of God, it is not the elaborateness of the ritual, nor the intricacies of design nor the splendour of gold and wealth exhibited, nor even the number of devotees attending, that contribute to their essential success. The *Gītā* was written at a time when ritualism had become so elaborate that the then Hindu religion, had become unavailable for the ordinary people. The simple folk were left with no field to satisfy their spiritual quest.

Arjuna was one of those confused members of the then society who had in him the ritualistic faith deeply ingrained and when Kṛṣṇa was giving the simpler method of intense self application, Arjuna was all the more confused. To him, religion without ritualism was almost meaningless. To reassure Arjuna, and through the Pāṇḍava prince, the generation of devotees who would be students of the *Gītā*, the Lord explains here that it is not what you offer but how you offer is that which guarantees the result.

[1] I, for one, rather sympathise with them, and will certainly declare that their wishes are perfectly justifiable in a society where there are more sick persons than healthy ones; more breeding than even our highest imagination could ever believe possible; more misguided education than illiteracy and more mad ones than sane men. A society of mad men, illiterates or miseducated, suffering from all possible physical ulcers, when they come to live thickly in lust and passion, breeding enormously... in such an era of brutes, worse than animals, their society needs no more temples. Certainly they need more hospitals, asylums, maternity homes and schools!!!

Today, at the various divine altars of worship available all over the world, it is the mortal priest who decides what the Immortal expects from the paltry pockets of the faithful! Here, almost always, it is more the expression of the priests' own desires rather than the demand of the Lord in the idol. In the *Gītā*, however, we find in this stanza, the Supreme Himself expressing what would please Him the most. This statement has the assurance of something from 'the horse's mouth'.

The very language and diction of the stanza clearly ring the note that the material objects that one offers are of no value to the Lord of the universe, but it is the purity and love that prompt the offerings that are accepted by the deity. Be it 'a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water', it is insignificant what you offer; be it a golden temple, or be it a dry leaf, 'whosoever with devotion offers', whatever be the offering, the Lord of Vrindavan assures 'That I accept'. For, when lovingly given, it becomes 'a devout gift' and when it is offered by a sincere 'pure minded' student, the Lord has to accept it.

In bringing their offerings to any altar, the rich very sadly misunderstands that they are patronising the Lord of wealth with their ephemeral gold and diamonds. If God were to be purchased, certainly the bourgeois alone can gain an entry into the heavens.[1]

[1] And even there some of them may not, because of the price of the admission ticket may, according to them, too high, while there is always complimentary ticket for everyone to enter the hell!

There are more than one carefully coined word in the stanza which explains the theory of sacrifice insisted upon in all religions. No doubt, the Absolute requires no offering at all from the finite mortal to complete Its Perfection, or to maintain Its infinite glory. The limited individuals try to offer at the altar of their Lord something that they misappropriate from the Lord's own garden, the world. In a public park, a lover often pinches a flower from the neighbouring bush and offers it to his beloved. Similarly, a devotee steals something from the Lord's own palace, and offers the same unto Him. In fact, when we thus analyse carefully, we know the hollowness of the vanity of offering something unto the Lord.

And yet, this is insisted upon as an important technique in all forms of worship. In offering a flower, or a fruit unto the Lord, if the devotee feels that he is making a sacrifice of the very thing that he offers, he is misusing the very act. The flower, here, serves only the purpose of a spoon in conveying something unto the Lord. While taking soup, the man at the table, no doubt, lifts the spoon many times up to the mouth, and at the end of the dinner the spoon remains the same as before, having finished its work. The flowers or the fruits in the garden and in the temple remain the same, but when the devotee gathers and carries them to the altar, and offers them, they become the conveyors of his own love and dedication unto the Lord of his heart.

This idea has been brought out in this stanza, when the Lord says: "That I accept ... the devout gift of the pure minded".

Therefore, on the whole, it is clear that an offering can be efficient, only when it is accompanied by the two required conditions - (a) 'offered with devotion' and (b) 'when it is by the pure minded'. To the extent, these features are absent, all offerings are mere economic waste and superstition breeding false beliefs. If properly done, it can serve as a good vehicle to tread the spiritual path of self-development.

Therefore:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्॥ २७॥

yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat,
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam. (27)

यत् - whatever; करोषि - you do; यत् - whatever;अश्नासि - you eat; यत् - whatever; जुहोषि - you offer in sacrifice; ददासि - you give in charity; यत् - whatever; यत् - whatever; तपस्यसि - you practise as austerity; कौन्तेय - O Kaunteya; तत् - that; कुरुष्व - do; मत् अर्पणम् - as an offering to Me

27. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, whatever you practise as austerity, O Kaunteya, do it as an offering to Me.

This stanza explains how through all activities of life one can constantly live in the spirit of 'devout offering' unto the Supreme. Throughout the *Gītā* it has been time without number, insisted upon that the mental attitude is of supreme importance, than the mere physical act. And, this is a fact which ordinarily the seekers forget.

There are many who complain, "I wish I could offer a kingdom unto the Lord, but I have none" – such idle complaints are being beautifully silenced in this stanza. The Lord, as the Master of all the wealth, needs nothing more

than what man can offer Him, He being Himself the creator and the sustainer of all objects. All that He requires is the meek attitude of the heart, full of devotion, bent in the 'spirit of offering'. Therefore, through all activities of life and in all circumstances, if one can keep oneself in an 'offering attitude' he can come to gain the peace of spiritual living.

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away as charity, or whatever austerities you practise,' all these can be done as a sacred offering unto the Eternal, and thereby maintain a constant remembrance of the Supreme, while living through the vanities of life.

In all actions of perception and our reaction to the perceived, be they on the physical, mental or intellectual levels, make them all a 'devout offering unto Him'. In fact, this is not an unnecessary make-belief or a mere fancied exaggeration. Nor is it in any way, very difficult for an individual to practise this. The one Self revels everywhere; in the teacher, in the devotee and in the Lord. In all our life's transactions, we behave, act and deal with other names and forms, and all of them, we know, require the existence of the Self to uphold them. To remember the Self during all transactions of life is but to remember the substratum. In a cloth shop there are clothes of different colours and sizes, textures and prices, and the shopkeeper is advised to remember always that he is dealing with cotton clothings. This cannot be very difficult to any sane shopkeeper, and it will be safe and profitable too for him to remember this fact, for it would prevent him from entertaining misconceptions and thereby either charging the exhorbitant prices of the

woolens, or selling off his goods as cheap as gunny bags! If a goldsmith is asked to remember that he is working on gold, it is only for his own benefit.

Just as cotton is in all clothes, gold in all ornaments, the Self is the essential stuff in all names and forms. A devotee, who can constantly remember the Divine in all his contacts in life, he alone is the one who can give to life the respect and reverence that it deserves. It is a law in life that as you give unto life, so shall life provide for you. Smile at life and life smiles; frown at life and life frowns at you; approach life with due reverence and respect born out of the cognition of the divine essence in it, and life too shall learn to respect and revere the individual.

When all the activities are performed in the spirit of offering, not only that our love for the Supreme increases in us but also our entire life becomes sanctified with a noble purpose and a diviner aim. In the context of the *Gītā's* insistence on single pointedness of mind, and devoted contemplation of the Self, so far described, we can easily find how this stanza provides us again with an efficient and secret method by which the seekers are unconsciously made to remember the Supreme constantly; not in the deep jungles, nor in the secret caves, but right on the field of life's contentions.

What would be the effect of such a method of living life in the pure spirit of dedicated offering? ... Listen:

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः।
सन्न्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥ २८ ॥

śubhāśubhaphalairevaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ,
sannyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māmupaiṣyasi. (28)

शुभ-अशुभ-फलैः - from good and evil fruits; एवम् - thus; मोक्ष्यसे - (thou) shalt be freed; कर्मबन्धनैः - from the bonds of actions; सन्न्यास-योग-युक्त-आत्मा - with the mind steadfast in the yoga of renunciation; विमुक्तः - liberated; माम् - to Me; उपैष्यसि - (thou) shalt come

28. Thus shalt thou be freed from the bonds of actions yielding good and evil fruits; with the mind steadfast in the yoga of renunciation, and liberated, thou shalt come unto Me.

The spiritual goal remaining the same, the divine paths are different; and when the different paths are explained, though they look mutually very different from each other, they all have the same scientific basis that justifies each one of them. At many places in the *Gītā*, this fundamental basis has been directly brought to the recognition of the students, while in some few instances it is slightly veiled so that only careful students can always come to recognise it. Here in this section, we are in the midst of a discussion on how, by living life in a 'spirit of offering', the individual can come

to claim and enjoy the highest perfection which meditation promised earlier or the yajña spirit guaranteed at another place.

It has been very clearly brought home to us[1] by now that it is the granulations made up of the past impressions in the mental zone that raise a mist in us, which veils the effulgent glory of the Self in us from ourselves. To cleanse the atmosphere of the hanging dust of past impressions is the duty of a seeker. The purgation of the vāsanās can be successfully undertaken only when the mind is allowed to act and serve freely, in any given field of work, without 'ego and the egocentric desires'.[2] Any method by which we can continue to float on the stream of life without bringing into play our egocentric arrogations, would be a method of cleansing the impressions of the past actions. This conducive mental climate can be gained if we sincerely pursue the technique described above, wherein it is advised that we should strive to live the whole life as a constant love offering unto the Lord.

When actions are undertaken, thus, without ego, the reactions of those actions, whether good or bad, cannot reach us, since the one to suffer or enjoy the reactions would be 'out of station' from the given bosom. The ego acts, and it is the ego that receives the reactions. If deaf man were to howl in an enclosed valley, he cannot receive the echo because when the echo reaches his ears, the hearer is not therein to receive it.

[1] Refer *Gītā* – 3

[2] Refer general introduction – *Gītā* – 1 & 2

Hence Bhagavān says, "You shall be free from the bondages of actions, good or evil". Since the reactions arising from fresh actions do not add their impressions on to the mind, and since the existing impressions get wiped out during the mind's activities in the world outside, slowly and steadily, the mind gets almost a total purgation of all its existing contents. In short, the mind becomes more and more purified, the term being used in its scriptural sense. A purified mind has more concentration and single pointedness.

The next stage of evolution would be that such a purified mind, discovering in itself more and more discrimination, learns to live a life of sannyāsa and yoga. Both these terms are to be understood in the *Gītā*-way. Earlier these terms were very elaborately discussed. Sannyāsa or renunciation is not the physical rejection of the world, but in the language of the *Gītā*, sannyāsa is the renunciation of: (a) all egocentric activities and (b) all anxieties or cravings for the fruits of actions. These two effects would be natural in one who is striving diligently in the world, as an expression of his love for the Lord, and only to dedicate in the end all the results unto the Lord as an 'offering'.

One, who has come to live the *Gītā*-sannyāsa and has developed thereby, a pure mind full to the brim sweetened with discrimination, to him yoga is natural; especially so, because all through the hours of his activity he is constantly remembering the Self, the Infinite.

Naturally, such a seeker discovers to himself that his earlier identifications with the false and the consequent sense of limitations and pains of mortality fall off from him and he

discovers himself to be of his divine nature: 'By practice and renunciation you shall find release and come to Me'.

The steady logic of thought that can be detected running all through the *Gītā* by every careful student gives it the dignity and status of a textbook of science in the world's literature. Nowhere in the *Gītā* does one find a slipshod expression which grates against its rhythmic flow of thought. At certain moments, the obvious meaning of some stanzas may give us a false jerk; but such stanzas, we feel, are deliberately kept there to make the student think for himself more and more sincerely and discover the harmony and rhythm of thought that are so beautifully veiled by such stanzas.

The seeker is promised that he will go to the Supreme. What then is the nature of the Self?

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥ २९ ॥

samo'haṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ,
ye bhajanti tu māṁ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham. (29)

समः - the same; अहम् - I; सर्वभूतेषु - in all beings; न - not; मे - to Me; द्वेष्यः - hateful; अस्ति - is; न - not; प्रियः - dear; ये - who; भजन्ति - worship; तु - but; माम् - Me; भक्त्या - with devotion; मयि - in Me; ते - they; तेषु - in them; च - and; अपि - also; अहम् - I

29. The same am I to all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear; but those who worship Me with devotion, are in Me and I am also in them.

Like in all ordinary religions, there is in the *Gītā*, no make-belief God Principle for the mental consolation of the devotees. The *Gītā* caters neither to the weaknesses in man nor to the glories of the perfection. It is a scientific literature describing without fear or favour, the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. The stanza under review is a brilliant example of this characteristic feature of the statements in the *Gītā*.

The Self is one in all beings: The same Conscious Principle illuminates the emotions and thoughts in all

bosoms of all living creatures. 'I am in all beings'. The same sun illumines all objects in the world and its rays get reflected on all surfaces; be it upon the dull, rough surface of a rock, or the bright polished facet of a jewel.

To Me there is none hateful or dear: If the same Self revels in Kṛṣṇa and Buddha, Śaṅkarācārya and Christ, in a lunatic and a murderer, in the good and the bad, why is it that some are able to recognise the divine status of the Self and others live like worms? In the emotional literature, expounding the bhakti cult, there is always the sentimental explanation that it is because, under the Lord's direct grace, some come to manifest a greater amount of divinity. This theory may be satisfactory to the few, who do not bring their reasoning capacity into the field of religious discussion. But to an intelligent few, this explanation spells absurd, inasmuch as the Supreme would have to be considered as exhibiting partiality among the world of the living beings. To negate this imperfect explanation, and to express the purely scientific theory, Kṛṣṇa declares the truth that the Self is the same everywhere, always, and that to the Self, there is no distinction between the good and the bad; the Self entertains neither a particular love nor any special hatred for any of the living beings.

This should not be understood as meaning that the Self is an impotent factor, inert, and emotionless with no capacity in Itself to bless or to help. Employing the analogy of the sunlight which we have already examined, the idea implied here can be better understood. Even though the same sunlight reflects itself upon the different types of objects in the world, it is true that the quality and the nature of the reflecting surface will

determine the clarity and the intensity of the light reflected. On a dull piece of rough stone there will be the least amount of light reflected, while in a bright clean and polished mirror there will be, perhaps, the maximum reflection.

Because of this difference, sunlight cannot be accused of having special love for the mirror, or disgust for the rough surface. Applying the analogy to the subjective life, it becomes clear that if the spiritual strength and beauty get reflected more through the golden hearts of the rare few and do not at all get reflected through the iron hearts of the ordinary many, it is not because the Self entertains in Itself any preference to, or any prejudice against anyone, but it is only a natural phenomenon, happening in perfect obedience to the law of the universe.

Though, thus, in the first line, there is a total negation of any relationship whatsoever between the Self and the not-Self, in the following line, there is a striking idea expressed, which at first, smothers the readers with its vivid contradiction. 'But those who worship Me with devotion, are in Me, and I too, am in them'. Even though the Self has neither any favour for, or any prejudice against the not-Self, to the extent the not-Self 'worship Me with devotion' they are 'in Me and I too, in them'. We generally can say that the ghost is in the post and the post is in the ghost, meaning thereby the non-dual nature of the Essence and the superimpositions upon It. Those who worship the Self with devotion come to rediscover that the worshippers themselves are none other than the Self that is worshipped by them.

Those who worship Me with devotion: This phrase can be initially understood as a mere ritualistic injunction, and it calls forth a little more closer and deeper study to realise its spiritual implications. Worship is a technique by which, in essence, the entire 'thought-force' in the worshipper is mobilised and turned to flow towards a diviner point of contemplation, ever seeking a total identity with the Truth so meditated upon. When this is done in a spirit of devotion or love[1], the worshipper comes to realise his total oneness with his object of worship.

With this implied meaning well in mind, when we re-read the stanza, what Kṛṣṇa meant in this philosophical statement becomes amply clear. Even though Truth has neither a preference for, nor a prejudice against anyone, some noble souls come to experience, and exhibit in themselves the effulgence of divinity because, as the Lord says, they, through their devoted worship, have sought and discovered their oneness with the Divine Principle, the Self.

In the Upaniṣads also[2] the same idea has been most expressly described. The idea is not that the eternal Self has any freedom 'to choose or not to choose' one individual from the other; it is the individuals themselves who create such conditions in themselves, wherein they can come to rediscover the Self. Teachers of Vedānta explain this idea by a striking example of a sweet-scented lonely flower on the roadside. This flower is equally available for recognition

[1] We have already explained how love is nothing but seeking one's own identity with the other.

[2] Refer discourses on *Kaṭhopaniṣad*. 1.2.24.

and enjoyment for everybody passing that spot. Many pedestrians walk along and pass by, not recognising either the fragrance hanging in the atmosphere or having the vision of beauty in the flower.

But a rare few among the passers-by approach the spot, become conscious of the fragrance, turn around to investigate its source and come to be blessed by its beauty, fragrance and the message of the solitary flower nodding in its thorny bush. Now, if such individuals can be considered as 'blessed by the flower,' to that extent, the Realised Soul can be considered as one who has been blessed by the Self, the Eternal.

In fact, he among the pedestrains, who had his mind preoccupied with his own marketplace problems, could not come to enjoy the grace of the flower; while that individual, who with his mind free from all preoccupations and alert to all available experiences, came to live the fragrance, as though, through some special grace of the flower.

A mind, that is preoccupied with its own egocentric attachments with the not-Self, cannot come to live the bliss of Perfection, while, the same mind, when it has detached itself from its extrovert preoccupations, becomes a ready instrument to seek and to discover its true identity with the Self. The condition of the mind declares whether an individual is confused or clear, bound or redeemed. A mind that is turned outwards, rushing out and panting to gain its satisfactions in the world of objects, gets itself bound to the finite, and comes to groan with pain and disappointment; while the same mind turned inward, away from the objects,

seeking the Self, comes to rediscover its own identity with the spiritual centre.

In winter, inside a room one suffers from cold, while outside there is plenty of sunshine. The one who walks out of the room into the sunshine comes to be blessed by the warmth of the sun while those who bury themselves in their rooms suffer the discomforts of the cold. The sun has neither a preference for those who are basking under its rays, nor a prejudice against those who do not come under its shine and warmth. In the language of this stanza, we may call those who have walked in to the sunny courtyard as those who are 'blessed' by the sun, while those who stay indoors are those that are 'not blessed' by the sun.

Never does the *Gītā*, at any point in its length, encourage man's surrender to circumstances, or to his own present debilities and incompetencies. As a scripture of activity and optimistic endeavour, the *Gītā* unmistakably emphasises the ultimate independence of man over his present weaknesses and even over his present circumstances.

Is this path of Self-discovery available only for the good? ... Listen:

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥ ३० ॥

api cetsudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk,
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ. (30)

अपि - even; चेत् - if; सुदुराचारः - a very wicked person; भजते - worships; माम् - Me; अनन्यभाक् - with devotion to none else; साधुः - righteous; एव - verily; सः - he; मन्तव्यः - should be regarded; सम्यक् - rightly; व्यवसितः - resolved; हि - indeed; सः - he

30. Even if the most sinful worships Me, with devotion to none else, (or with single pointedness), he too, should indeed be regarded as righteous, for he has rightly resolved.

The practice of devotion, understood in its special meaning in which it is used in the *Gītā*, is glorified here by indicating its effects upon each individual practitioner. In the *Gītā*, bhakti is selfless contemplation with a single pointed mind upon the non-dual Brahman considered as nothing other than the very essence in the devotee[1]. When this bhakti is practised for a sufficiently long time, with the required

[1] Refer Swamijī's commentary on *Vivekacūḍamaṇi* – 31
mokṣakāraṇasāmagryāṁ bhaktireva garīyasī,
svasvarūpānusandhānaṁ bhaktirityabhidhīyate.

intensity and sincerity, the evolution in the individual is mapped out here showing the various stages in its efflorescence.

Ordinarily, there is a vague belief that a vicious sinner or a desperate criminal is an outcaste, who can never dare to enter the courtyard of the heavens. This immoral condemnation of the sinner is an unhappy misreading of the spirit of Vaidika literature. No doubt the Vedas condemn the sin, but not the sinner. The evil ways of the sinner are all expressions of the evil thoughts in his mind, and if the texture of the thoughts at present flowing in his mind could be changed, the texture of his behaviour will also be transformed. The one who has come to keep consistently in his mind, thoughts of the Lord, in the warmth of his growing devotion, such in individual accomplishes so total a rehabilitation of his mental life that he cannot thereafter carry on his career in sin.

Even if a wicked person worships Me: The *Gītā* not only throws open its gates to the sinners, but the singer of the divine song also seems to have great missionary zeal to redeem all sinners, and he is anxious to bless them. Even those who are taken to evil ways are not debarred because of their actions and the impurity of their lives, to enter the field of spirituality. The insistence is only that the worship of the Self must be performed by the devotee with 'undivided devotion'. Here the term 'undivided' (ananya) can be applied both to the 'mind of the meditator' and to the 'goal meditated upon!' On the whole, the phrase advises that the devotion can pay its promised dividend only when the devotee, with a single pointed mind, contemplates upon

a goal that is non-dual and permanent. The non-dual Self is not to be considered as different from the very essence in the devotee (ananya).

He should be regarded as good: Even though he had been, till this day, a man of evil ways, wicked and cruel, living the life of the senses, uncontrolled and passionate, even then, from the moment he has taken to the path of contemplation with devotion upon the Supreme, he is to be considered, says Kṛṣṇa, as 'saintly and good'. Such a usage is common in every language, when we want to emphatically assert a state or condition to be fulfilled in the immediate future. In all such cases, we claim it as a state accomplished, even in the present: 'baking the bread', 'making the tea', are all examples when, even while kneading the flour or boiling the water, we call these acts with a term indicating anticipatory fulfilments. Similarly here, one who has taken to the Path Divine is called, from that very moment, as 'good and saintly' because he will soon (acirāt) grow out of himself to thrive and flourish in the vaster atmosphere of his spiritual glory.

Such an individual is to be considered good and divine, 'for', as Kṛṣṇa puts it, 'he has rightly resolved'. In the Life Divine, right resolution is more important than mere routine practice. Majority of seekers whip themselves up to plod on their paths a melancholy brood, like famished cattle, trodding their way to the meat-market! Such a melancholy procession can reach nowhere but a butcher's block where 'time' sits to hack them into pieces. The one who steadily walks the path with an iron heart of resolution, open eyed and enthusiastic, cheerful and heroic, is the one noted

for success and therefore, the Flute-bearer emphatically asserts that the rightly resolved man of evil ways is to be considered from that moment of his noble decision, as one especially marked out to be soon the most successful Man of Perfection.

How do we know that what you are talking is not a bluff? What exactly is the effect of such a single pointed devotion?

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥ ३१ ॥

kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṁ nigacchati,
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati. (31)

क्षिप्रम् - soon; भवति - becomes; धर्मात्मा - righteous; शश्वत् - eternal; शान्तिम् - peace; निगच्छति - attains to; कौन्तेय - O Kaunteya; प्रतिजानीहि - know for certain; न - not; मे - My; भक्तः - devotee; प्रणश्यति - is destroyed

31. Soon he becomes righteous and attains eternal peace, O Kaunteya, know for certain that My devotee is never destroyed.

The logical thoughts that lie behind the daring assertion[1] of Kṛṣṇa are being indicated in this stanza. A man of evil ways when he takes to a life of single pointed devotion propelled by his ardent resolve, that man 'soon becomes righteous'. The term dharma was already explained in the opening of our commentary as 'the law of being'. Just as heat is the specific quality (dharma) of fire, without which fire cannot exist, the dharma of man is the divine Ātman in him,

[1] Made in the previous stanza, in its anticipatory assertion that even a wicked person when rightly resolved, must be from that moment, considered as good and saintly.

without which none of his personality layers can ever come to express of itself. Therefore, the term 'dharmātmā' in the stanza, is not fully expressed when it is translated as 'a man of righteousness'.

Single pointed devotion and self application develops concentration and, therefore, enhances the subtlety of reception of the mind, and such a mind finds its balance even in the highest altitudes of its meditative flights. 'In good time' meaning ere long, he comes to gain glimpses of the infinite experience and thus, comes to live more and more as a dynamic saint, wafting the fragrance of divinity through his motives, thoughts, and actions.

The next stage would necessarily be then, that he gets more and more established in this divine awareness of his own infinite glory, 'and attains eternal peace'. The term peace is one of the most bombarded and ill-treated terms, maximum used and little understood, in our times. Peace is not the temporary cessation of the war-condition, though we generally accept it to be so in the world. When one generation has torn into bits half the existing population, and in this effort, when the victorious half gets itself maimed and broken, shattered and crushed, ulcerated and oozing, in their physical, mental and intellectual layers, there comes a dull pause, laden with the fatigue, wherein the victorious lie back to mourn for the dead and groan for its own ulcers – and this, we have learnt to call 'peace' in the world.

Religion has more sternly practical and vividly healthy valuation of life to meekly accept such a bleeding interval

between two death dances, as a satisfying goal of life. The peace that is indicated here is the inward peace which is beyond the thunders and storms of life, which having gained, the individual comes to find himself ever in an oasis in the midst of deserts, ever in a harbour in the midst of storms, ever in bliss – even when nailed on a cross or torn into bits or made to face the smoky end of a noisy gun!!

This substantial edifice of peace which strengthens and fortifies the existence in us, is the tranquillity divine, which we come to live as our essential being when the mind stops its mad revelry of its own agitations and excitements. There is no religion in the world which does not point out to this goal, experienceable when the mind is at rest. A still mind is an open window through which man peeps out to see himself reflected in the mirror of Truth. The term guaranteeing here that a true devotee soon reaches the supreme peace is to be rightly understood as not a destination that lies far away from us, but that it is only as a rediscovery in ourselves of our own true nature.

The perfection indicated in religions lies only as far away from us as our waking state is from our dreams. It is a question of rightly adjusting the focus; if a camera is 'out of focus' the photo snapped will give only a blurred representation of a fairyland, while the same scene photographed by the same camera, well-focussed and adjusted, gives us its gorgeous beauty with all details in the photo. A mind and intellect, maladjusted and incessantly getting shunted between the ever-rising waves of desires and passions are not the right instruments to cognise and discover the Truth that lies beneath the mind in the same bosom.

The second line of the stanza brings out the incomparable missionary in Kṛṣṇa, who seems to explode Himself with His own rising fire and enthusiasm. After declaring the truth that even a man of dire evil ways can start his pilgrimage on the very day he takes unto himself the firm resolve to educate his mind, and after indicating the stages of his growth, till he reaches the supreme peace, the Wooer of the gopīs, here as it were, pats on the back of Arjuna and declares " boldly you can proclaim that My devotee is never destroyed".

Somewhere down the sad annals of the recent Hindu history this missionary zeal has been given up, and a cold, step-motherly attitude has come to be taken up by the learned paṇḍita class, who have come to think that to confuse their followers is the noblest of their arts! We, as children of the present age, are made to pay the highest penalties for the mistakes of the misguided past generations of unimaginative religious leaders. Earlier also we found Kṛṣṇa insisting that Arjuna should, without any reservation, declare to the world what he had understood. In the Upaniṣads[1] also during the last class lecture and on the convocation day, when the teacher bade farewell to his students and let them out to live in the society, they were commissioned not only to live what they had been taught and to continue educating themselves, but also to preach what they knew and what they lived.[2]

Toeing the line with the spirit of the ṛṣis, Kṛṣṇa says that Arjuna should declare from the housetops the one unchallengeable truth that the seeker of the nobler values

[1] Read Swamiji's discourses on *Taittirīya-upaniṣad: Sikṣā-valli* sec 9 and sec 11

[2] Svādhyāya pravacane ca – *Taittirīya-upaniṣad: Sikṣā-valli* sec 9

shall know no failure if his resolve is firm and he is sincere in his self application. The special phrase, employed here to declare Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna, 'pratijānīhi', has, in Sanskrit, its own special powers of assertion, and can express a sort of imperative urgency. Those, who are students of the Sanskrit language can easily perceive it; those who are not, may make a note of the same.

In short, this and the previous stanza together express that one who has come to entertain constantly, at least at one corner of his mind, a continuous awareness of the Divine Principle and allows it to influence upon the rest of his mental field, he is the one marked out for progress and growth, both in his life within and in the life without. Just as a blue street light throws a pool of light, irresective of the dresses that they wear, all gather upon themselves an extra blue tinge, so too, in the bright light of divine awareness, even criminal thoughts rising in that mind would gather the golden hue of a godly perfection. Like the mothballs kept in a wardrobe protect all the clothes kept therein and keep away all the worms, so too, the constant smaraṇam of the divine nature of the Self protects the human personality from the destructive worms of its inward negativities.

Further:

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम्॥ ३२॥

māṁ hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ,
striyo vaiśyāstathā śūdrāste'pi yānti parāṁ gatim. (32)

माम् - Me; हि - indeed; पार्थ - O Pārtha; व्यपाश्रित्य - taking refuge in; ये - who; अपि - even; स्युः - may be; पापयोनयः - of a sinful birth; स्त्रियः - women; वैश्याः - vaiśyas; तथा - also; शूद्राः - śūdras; ते - they; अपि - even; यान्ति - attain; पराम् - the supreme; गतिम् - goal

32. For, taking refuge in Me, they also, O Pārtha, who may be of a 'sinful birth' - women, vaiśyas as well as śūdras even they attain the supreme goal.

As an annotation and an explanatory appendix to the immediately preceding pair of stanzas, here it is added that only those who are placed under wrong influences and unfavourable external conditions that are redeemed by the constant remembrance of the Divine, but even those who are victims of congenital maladjustments, both in their mental make-up and in their intellectual constitution, can also get their equipments re-adjusted and tuned up properly by the same process of constant remembrance of the Truth Eternal.

This stanza is an example of how traditional beliefs cloud the mind and make us unaware of the obvious, and

pervert our understanding to read some meanings that are not there in the scripture. At some period in the past, the healthy cast system started deteriorating, and it fell to become iron caskets to vivisect the community and disintegrate the harmonious growth of the society.

Slowly Knowledge came to be the monopoly of a few, and religion came under the proprietorship of a section of the community. Soon this section unconsciously deteriorated to such an extent in their moral fibre and in their intellectual integrity, that they soon started interpreting the scriptures to read into them a meaning that would fortress their prejudices and guarantee their monopoly for ever. The majority of the existing commentaries echo this false interpretation that came into vogue then.

Gītā, the universal scripture, which addresses itself always not a community, nor the followers of any particular creed, but only man in general, cannot be considered as indulging in a secret intolerance to any section of the humanity. Even the preceding two stanzas clearly expressed the large-heartedness and the divine tolerance of the universal religion of Kṛṣṇa which proudly proclaimed that even the vicious and the men of dire evil ways can be redeemed by the divine baptism recommended in the *Gītā*.

As a consistent textbook of scientific thought, the Lord could not have, all of a sudden, jerked Himself off from the main line of thought that He was following so far, only to express His condemnation of certain sections of the society which together constitute, at any given period of time and

place, the majority. Therefore, we will have to reject existing interpretations, available in the vast commentaries, and try to discover the original spirit in which Vyāsa had expressed his ideas.

No doubt, there are expressions in the Vedas, in the purāṇas, and in the smṛtis, which seemingly fall in line with the language of this stanza. To condemn women, traders (vaiśyas) and workers (śūdras) as individuals of inferior births is equivalent to accepting that religion has an effective influence only upon a mere handful of the members of the society. This would be a denial of what Kṛṣṇa had been hammering upon from the opening stanza onward. Therefore, we have to understand the true implications of His words as He uses them here.

Religion is not a technique of developing the physical body, nor is it an art to be fulfilled through the physical body. The condition and status of the physical body have nothing to do with the evolutionary progress which religion is pointing out through all its preachings. The spiritual practices contribute to the integration of the mind and intellect and to their progressive unfoldment, until, in their full ripeness, they shed themselves off, leaving the spirit naked in all its divine glory. Thus, these terms, as used in this stanza, are to be understood as indicating some special qualities of the human mind and intellect, manifested in varying degrees in different individuals, at different times.

The 'feminine minds' (striyaḥ) are those that have a larger share of their deep affections and blindening attachments[1].

[1] Refer Swamijī's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* – 2

So too, there are people, who have a commercial attitude in all their thoughts and actions and live in their mental life as traders (vaiśyas), ever calculating the profits that would be accrued for all their psychological investments. Such a calculating mind, ever looking up to the profits that could be raised, is not the mental attitude in which it can easily evolve through the path of meditation. To surrender all fruits of actions is the secret of holding the mind still, and make it live vitally the Infinite, that is the content of a single present moment. Thus, when the science of spiritual development condemns the traders, it is only a denunciation of the particular commercial tendency of their mind. psychological personalities that can fall under the group of 'traders' cannot hope to progress to schedule on the Path Divine.

Lastly, mental attitudes of slumber and slothfulness are that which are indicated by the term 'śūdra' here.

When once we have understood that these familiar terms, of that age, are borrowed by Kṛṣṇa to indicate special types of mind-intellect equipments, we have understood the stanza rightly, without pulling down the entire *Gītā* from its well merited dignity as a scripture of man.

The verse promises that, through constant remembrance of the Lord, not only all men of evil ways are redeemed, but even those, who are not walking the Path Divine, because of some psychological and intellectual debilities in them, will be cured and steadily strengthened to walk the path efficiently, if they too, with single pointed mind and through devotion,

learn to remember continuously, and meditate daily upon the divine Self.

Born out of the womb of sin (pāpa-yonayaḥ): This term qualifying women, traders and workers would be a blasphemous calumny against at least a majority of mankind which is an unpardonable crime, even if the statement comes from the divine mouth of a prophet. And yet, without blindly accepting the mere dictionary meaning of the word if we try to understand the philosophical import of the term, we shall find therein, an irreplaceable phrase which has summarised in itself volumes of beliefs according to Vedānta. And also, this term qualifying the women, the vaiśyas and the śūdras shall provide us with a confirmation that our interpretation of these words, as denoting the qualities of the mind, is fair.

Sin, according to Vedānta, is a wrong tendency in the mind created out of the past unhealthy thoughts and negative living. These wrong channels of thought, irresistibly drive man to live false values and bring about confusion and chaos into his own life, as well as into the lives of others. It is these wrong tendencies ploughed on the mental fields, that are the sources of the feminine nature of the mind (strītvam), or the commercial attitude of the intellect (vaiśyatvam), or the general dullness and slumberous morbidity in one's inner life (śūdratram). A dull-witted paṇḍita alone will have the necessary audacity to commit the calamitous folly of interpreting this stanza, adhering faithfully to the mere word meaning, conveniently forgetting Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own definition of varṇāśrama dharma given previously in his discourses.[1]

[1] Cāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ *Gītā* – 4.13

In short, when these wrong tendencies are in the mind, the ṛṣis had declared in sheer kindness, that it is useless for that mind to undertake a study of the Vedas and therefore, it was debarred from doing so. To attain the necessary qualification for a successful study of the sacred lore, the prescription is sādhanā. Of all the spiritual practices (sādhanā), the most efficient and salutory effort is the constant remembrance of the Lord with a heart flowing in love and devotion (upāsanā). It is the declaration of Vedānta that through upāsanā the mind gets purified – purified of its debilities – which were classified and indicated by the terms, 'women, traders and workers'.

When once these negative qualities have been removed from a given mind, it gains in its powers of concentration, single pointedness and balance for its flight to the very horizon of thought. When once the equipment is ready and it is rigged for the pilgrimage, the destination will soon be reached; and therefore, Kṛṣṇa promises 'even they attain the supreme goal'.

Kṛṣṇa goads Arjuna to walk the path of Self-realisation.

किं पुनर्ब्राह्मणाः पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा ।
अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥ ३३ ॥

kiṁ punarbrāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayastathā,
anityamasukhaṁ lokamimaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām. (33)

किम् पुनः - how much more; **ब्राह्मणाः** - brāhmaṇas; **पुण्याः** - holy; **भक्ताः** - devoted; **राजर्षयः** - royal saints; **तथा** - also; **अनित्यम्** - impermanent; **असुखम्** - unhappy; **लोकम्** - world; **इमम्** - this; **प्राप्य** - having obtained; **भजस्व** - worship; **माम्** - Me

33. How much more (easily) then, the holy brāhmaṇas and devoted royal saints (attain the goal). Having obtained this impermanent and joyless world, you do worship Me devotedly.

If the above mentioned mental types (verse 32) are highly handicapped in the race divine, Kṛṣṇa, by a self answering question, very emphatically points out here, how easy and almost natural must Self-realisation and godly life be to those who have the mental purity of a brāhmaṇa, or the big heart and stout head of the rightly determined rājarṣi. A king who having enjoyed intelligently his power and wealth, in his complete satiation arising out of the growing discrimination when he comes to experience the inward peace of true contemplation upon the Self, is called a rājarṣi.

After thus describing all the types of 'heads and hearts' possible in creation and after prescribing treatment for all of them to rediscover their own divine nature, the Lord, concluding the section, makes a general statement in the second line: 'Having attained this transient and joyless world, you do worship Me devotedly'. This instruction to Arjuna is an instruction for all, since in the *Gītā*, if Lord Kṛṣṇa represents the Self, Arjuna represents the confused man standing impotent against the challenges of life.

The description of the world is given here with two simple looking common terms very familiar in all philosophical literature of the āryans. But the full implication is to be truly digested and assimilated by all students. The term 'Loka' in Sanskrit comprises in its embrace the entire field of all possible experiences – physical, mental and intellectual. One of the features of the world of experience is that all experiences, without an exception, at all times and in all places, are transient in nature.

Apart from this, no experience in life gained at these different levels through the reaction of some equipment or the other, with one object or the other can be entirely satisfactory to any man. Nothing but the Infinite can satisfy an intelligent man totally. Continuity of experience cements the flow of the mind and temporarily negates all disturbances caused by the usual agitations in it. This condition of placid stillness on the surface of the mental pool creates the condition called joy, in man's life. Ordinarily, such a condition of joy is created, now and then, in an experience when the right object, in the required pattern, comes within the field of a healthy instrument of perception.

When this equation of the objects in one hand and instrument on the other, comes to function in a favourable mental atmosphere, it creates the conditions necessary for the experienceable joy. Evidently, therefore, this artificial mental poise which yields the experience of joy cannot remain permanently, since any disturbance, either in the field of objects or in the instruments or in the mental mood, should upset the balance and create discord in the very harmony which the individual had experienced earlier.

The world is lived by you in a field always constituted of objects, instruments and mental moods. These three quantities are ever in a state of change. Naturally, the flickering joys that come to us in life should prove transient. And the joys broken are the intervals of pain.

In tune with the positive philosophy of enervating optimism which the *Gītā* roars, Kṛṣṇa here declares the world to be not a mere pit of sorrows, or a ditch of despairs, or a mire of disappointments, but only a field of joylessness (asukham).

Having reached this world, impermanent and joyless: Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna, that he must spend himself in the worship of the Self. In this spiritual activity, Arjuna has been well encouraged by the Lord with his statements that to a heart that has not the weaknesses natural to the lower evolutes[1] but has a wealth of poise and understanding (brāhmaṇas and rajarṣis), which are the hallmarks of a higher evolution, success is easy and sure. Therefore 'You worship Me devotedly".

[1] Indicated by the terms : 'women, vaiśyas and śūdras' as applied to the mental conditions.

How then am I to worship You, my Lord, when I am to face my enemies and fight my battle?

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ ३४ ॥

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru,
māmevaiṣyasi yuktvaivamātmānaṁ matparāyaṇaḥ. (34)

मन्मनाः - with mind fixed on Me; **भव** - be you; **मद् भक्तः** - My devotee; **मद्याजी** - sacrifice to Me; **माम्** - to Me; **नमस्कुरु** - bow down; **माम्** - to Me; **एव** - alone; **एष्यसि** - you shall come; **युक्त्वा** - having united; **एवम्** - thus; **आत्मानम्** - the Self; **मत् परायणः** - taking Me as the supreme goal

34. Fix your mind on Me; be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me; having thus united your (whole) Self to Me, taking Me as the supreme goal, you shall come to Me.

This stanza under review is a beautiful summary of the entire chapter inasmuch as it throws a beam of light over its shoulders to flood the entire chapter with a better understanding. We may say that this stanza especially serves as a commentary to more than one verse in the same chapter (stanzas 14 and 27).

In all textbooks of Vedānta, (brahmavidyā) – the technique of self-development and self-perfection through the paths of right knowledge and meditation – has been

defined as, 'contemplation on That, talks on That, mutual discussions on That; and thus, to live ever mentally drowned in the bliss concept of the spiritual Reality', and is called by the knowers of It, as the pursuit of the Brahman[1]. Keeping this classical definition in mind, Vyāsa steadily delineates his aesthetic Path of Devotion in this stanza. The same idea has already been brought out earlier in the chapter on more than one occasion.

With 'the mind ever filled with Me, My devotee makes all sacrifices, all salutations to Me' at all times, whatever be the type of work that engages him. In brief, the evolution of the mind is the very essence of all spiritual reformation in life. Neither the conditions in which we are, nor our circumstances and habits, nor the available ways of life, nor our past, nor our present – none of these is a bar for evolving spiritually.

Constant awareness, maintained diligently, is the secret of success.

When thus "you take Me as the supreme Goal" Kṛṣṇa promises Arjuna, "you shall come to Me". We are what we are because of our thoughts. If the thoughts are noble and divine, we become noble and divine.

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[1] *Tat cintanaṁ tat kathanaṁ anyonyaṁ tat prabodhanam,*
etadeka paratvaṁ ca, brahmābhyāsaṁ vidurbudhāḥ.

Pañcadaśī – 7.106, 13.83

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
राजविद्याराजगुह्ययोगो नाम नवमोऽध्यायः

om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde
rājavidyārājaguhyayogo nāma navamo'dhyāyaḥ.

Thus, in the Upaniṣads of the glorious *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the science of the Eternal, in the scripture of yoga, in the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, the ninth discourse ends entitled:

The Yoga of Royal Knowledge and Royal Secret

This chapter has been rightly entitled as the chapter discussing the royal knowledge and the royal secret. These two terms have been already discussed at length. Earlier in the chapter (verse 2) we found that, since pure Consciousness is the Knowledge, in whose light all the other conditioned knowledges are made possible, this science, dealing with the Absolute, has been rightly called as the Royal Knowledge. Elsewhere in the Upaniṣads, it has been termed as the 'Knowledge of all knowledges'[1] because, 'having known which there is nothing more to be known'[2], declares *Muṇḍakopaniṣad.*

Om Om Om

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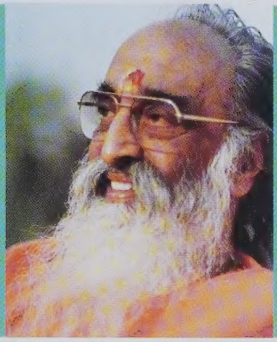
[1] *sarva vidyānāṁ vidyā* – parā vidyā – rāja vidyā

[2] *kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvam-idaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavatīti.*
– *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 1.1.3



Swami Chinmayananda

Hailed as the second Swami Vivekananda, Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda (1916-1993) has left a great legacy behind for mankind. On realising the true purpose of life, he worked tirelessly and with tremendous energy for more than four decades to spread the message of Vedānta. A great orator, writer, leader, patriot and spiritual giant, he is one of the finest representatives of Indian spiritual heritage. The sprawling worldwide organisation of Chinmaya Mission carries on the torch lit by this great saint.

What is that which can be known only by experience, the most secret knowledge, that inevitably leads to the supreme Brahman, that which is hidden to those who have not awakened in them their inner purity? - The art and practice of devotion.

This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa seeks to explain in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He begins by explaining that devotion to Him, the supreme Being, will deliver the direct experience of the Truth. He goes on to explain how devotion allows the uncovering of that sacred knowledge.

Pointing out the various pitfalls that prevent people from realising this, He enumerates ways in which great people have overcome them. Proceeding to the most common form of devotion, worship, Śrī Kṛṣṇa seeks to elaborate on the nature of worship, the different types of worship, and the fact that all can seek redemption through it.

He ends by giving a strong assurance, "O son of Kuntī, know for certain that My devotee will never perish."

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